

THE Atlantic

MAY 2006

DESERT ONE

BY MARK BOWDEN

THE INSIDE STORY OF A
TOP-SECRET DELTA FORCE
MISSION GONE AWRY

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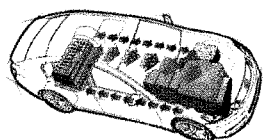
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Oil is sold globally for \$25/bbl

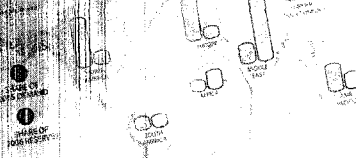
The U.S. has 3%

So what does that mean for us?

Building the natural gas infrastructure will cost \$2.7 trillion.

There is almost as much natural gas in the ground as there is oil.

WHERE IS THE GAS AND WHO NEEDS IT?

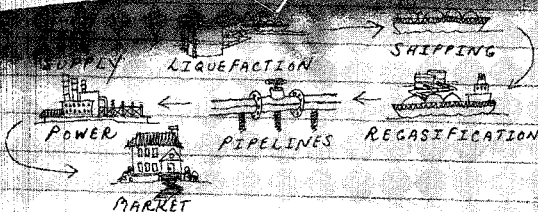


As demand for power and fuel grows steadily in the coming decades, we must consider every viable energy source at hand if we're to meet the world's needs. And because clean natural gas is found in abundance there is little doubt that it will play a major role on the world energy stage in this century, much like oil did in the last. But, like oil, gas reserves are concentrated in just a few places in the world, usually far from where they're needed most. And that's only part of the challenge. The world has had well over 100 years to search for oil and to build the necessary infrastructure to bring it to market; the natural gas infrastructure, particularly when it comes to liquefied natural gas (LNG), is not nearly as developed.

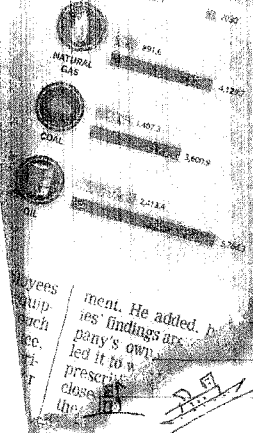
So what needs to be done? On the supply side, producing nations need policies that allow for efficient development of their natural gas in an open, stable business environment, not one in which the rules of the game change without warning. The governments of consuming nations, on the other hand, must enact long-term policies to encourage such development and to ensure they'll have adequate supplies in the future. That means building the related infrastructure, including LNG terminals. This, in turn, will require coastal communities to allow these necessary, but not necessarily pretty, facilities to be built in their backyards. And energy companies have a responsibility to be good neighbors in those communities by operating these facilities responsibly and safely. They must also continue to invest the billions of dollars needed to build the complex transport and storage infrastructure required to bring more gas to market.

Expanding and diversifying energy sources by using more natural gas could lead to lower fuel prices and to greater energy security. We've taken some of the steps to get started, but we need your help to get the rest of the way.

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World primary energy demand by fuel

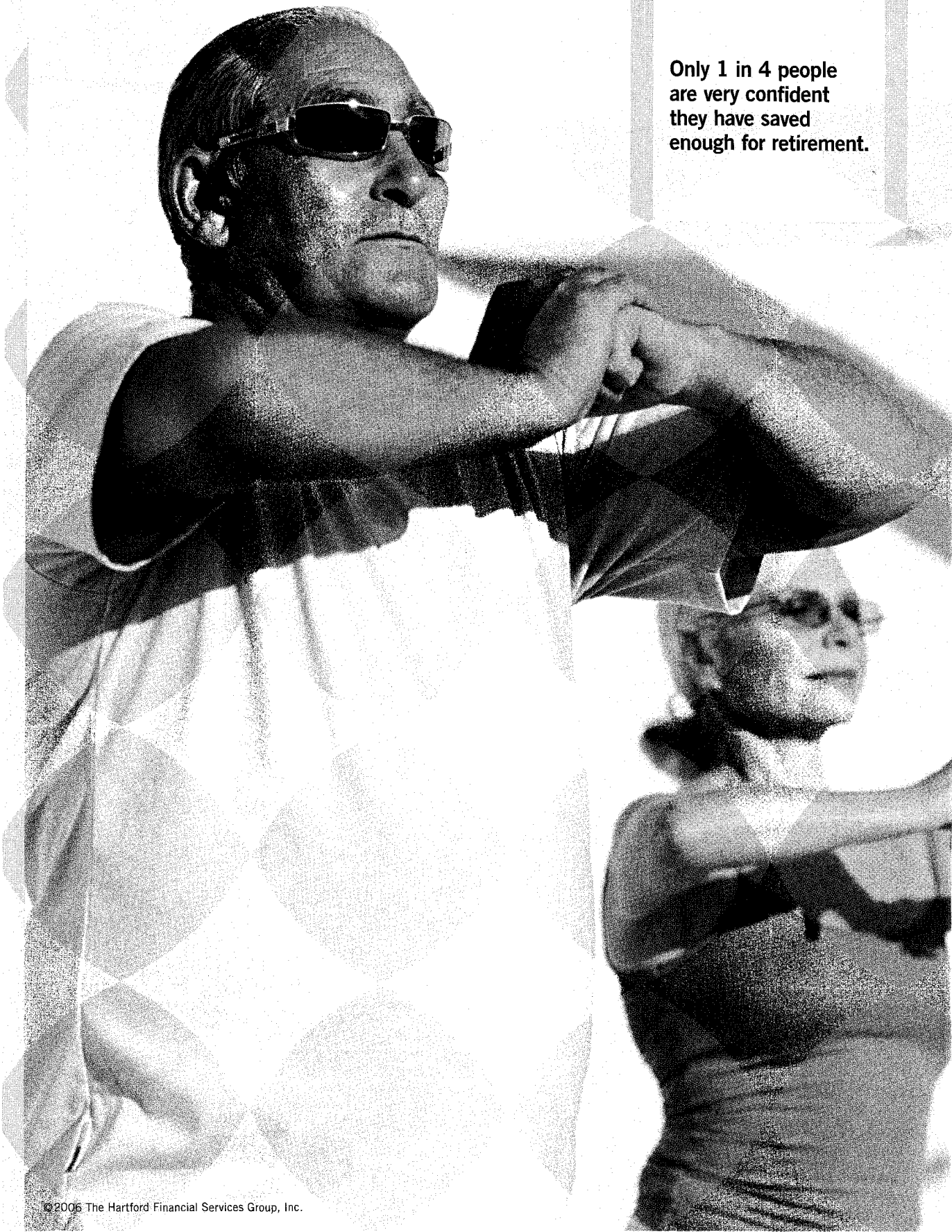


⚠️ Chevron Steps Taken:

- Planning to invest more than \$10 billion in developing gas projects over the next five years.
- Developing one of the largest integrated LNG projects in the world.
- Created a four country partnership to build West Africa's first regional gas pipeline.
- Spending more than \$1 billion over the next several years on next generation, ultra clean diesel fuel from natural gas.



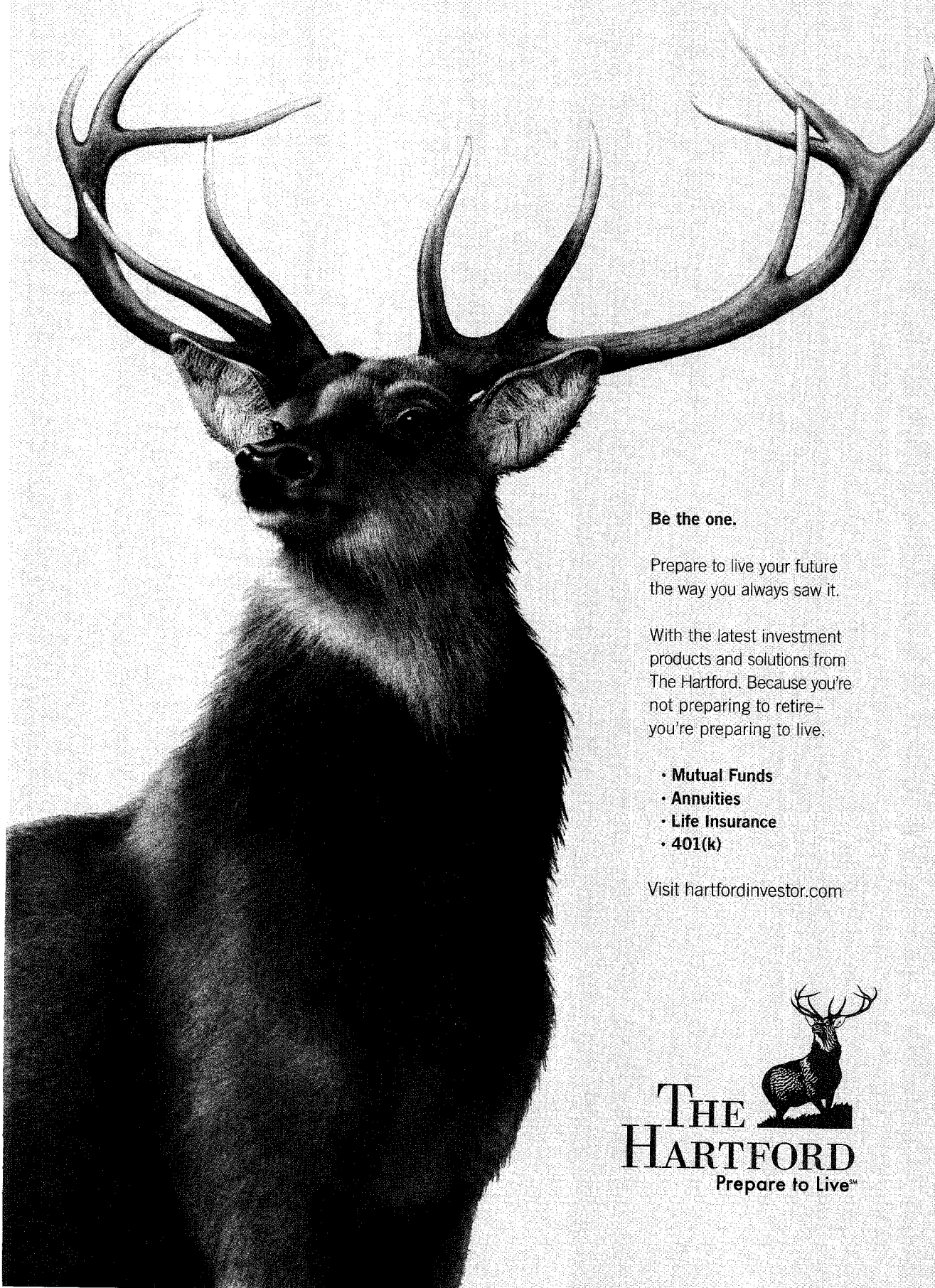
Human energy



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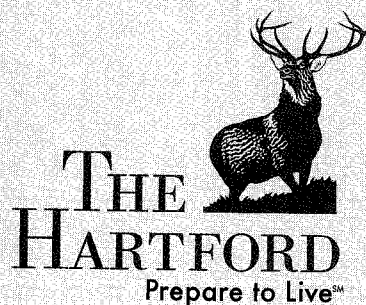
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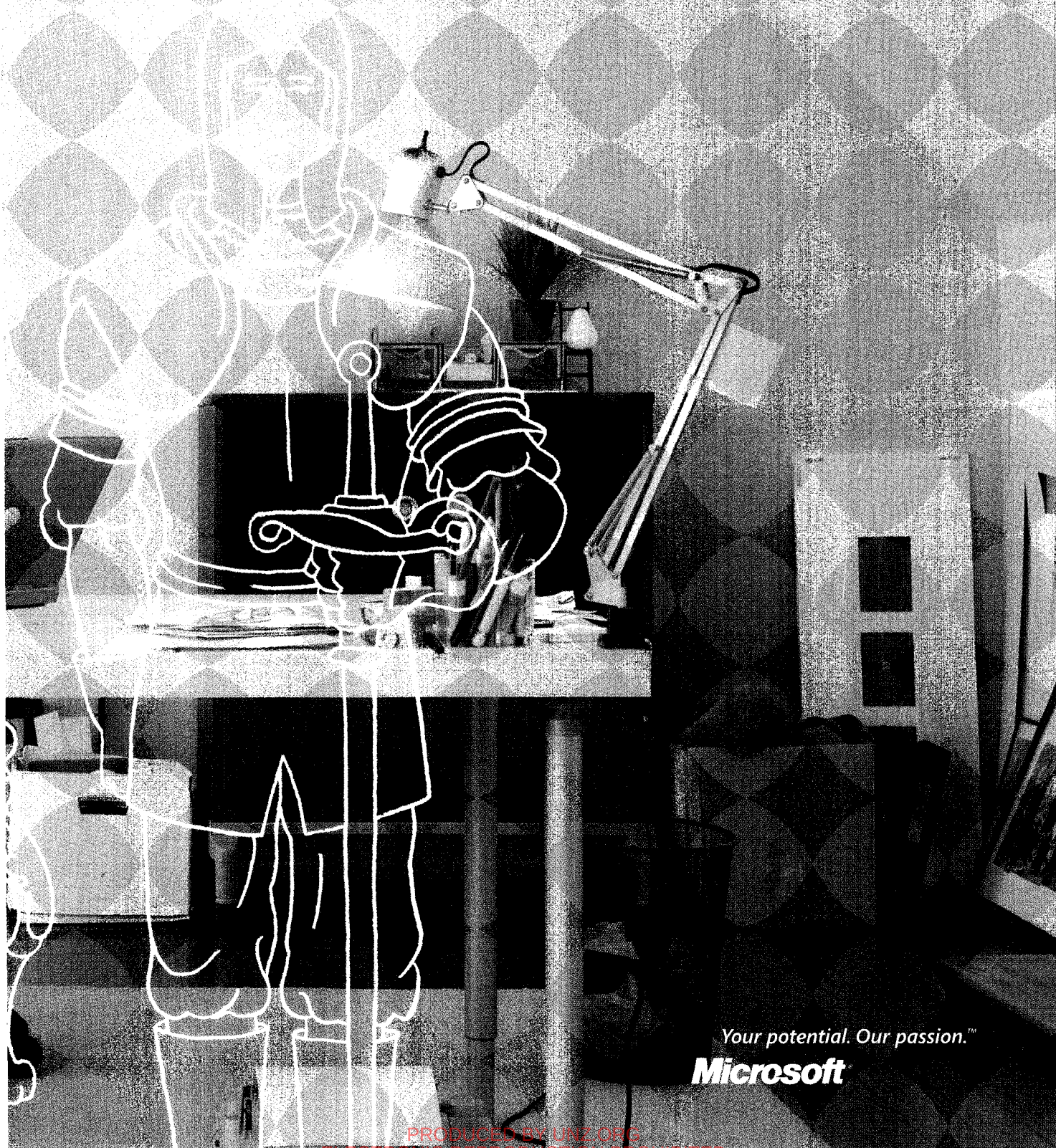
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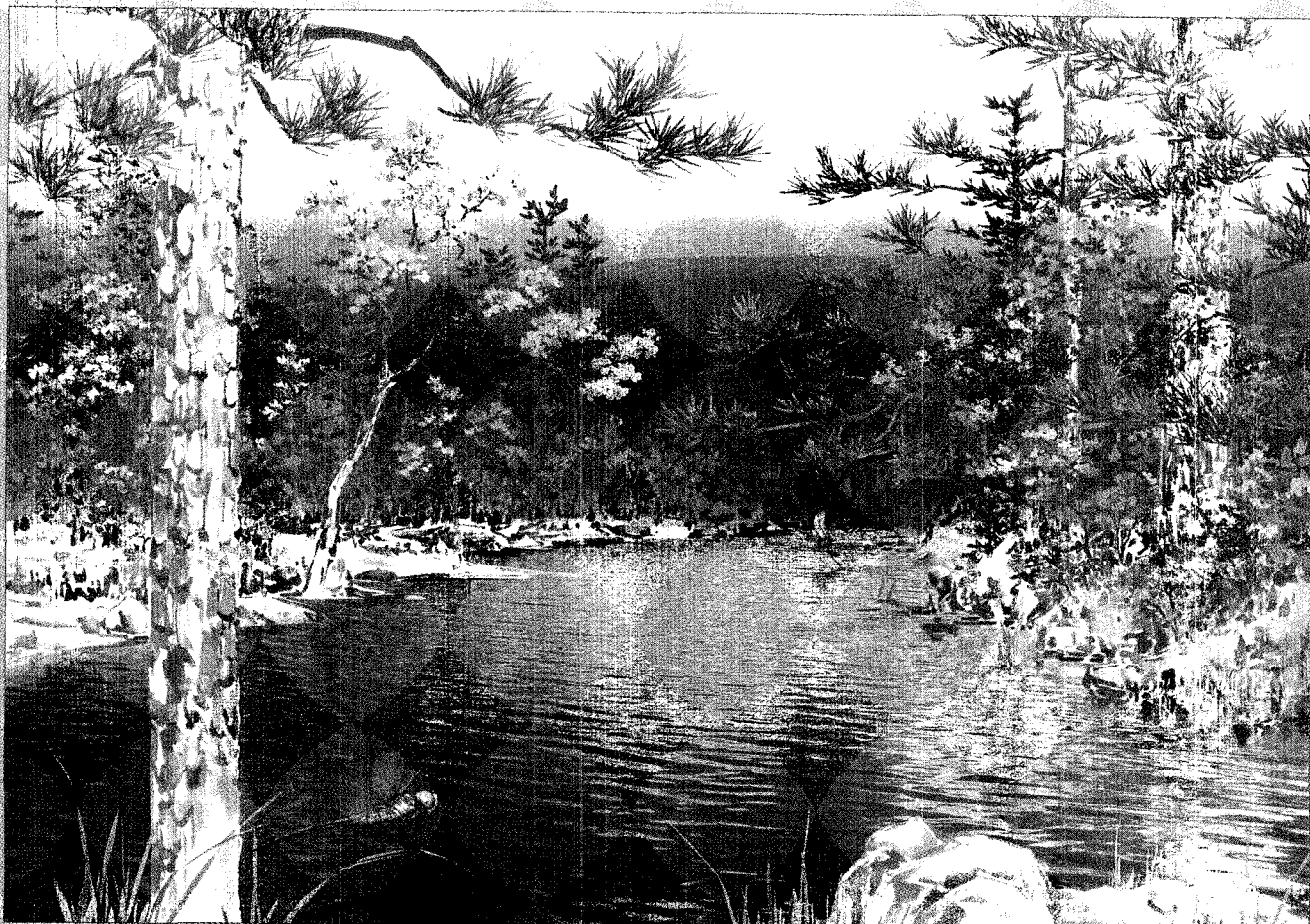
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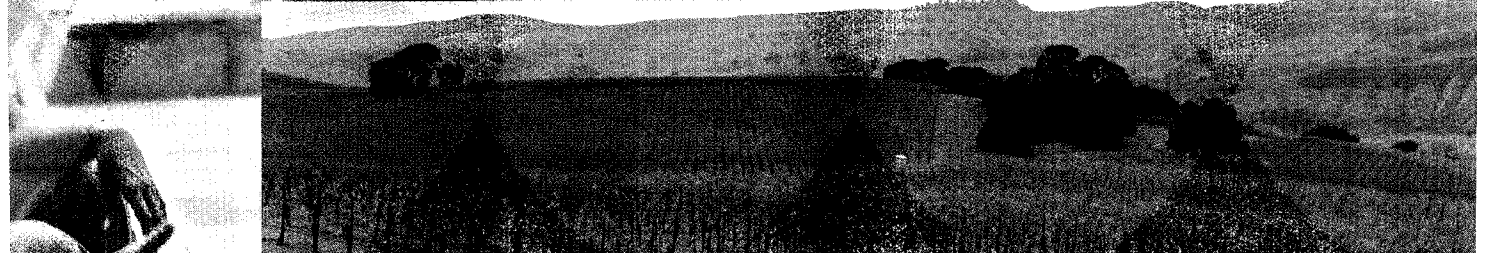
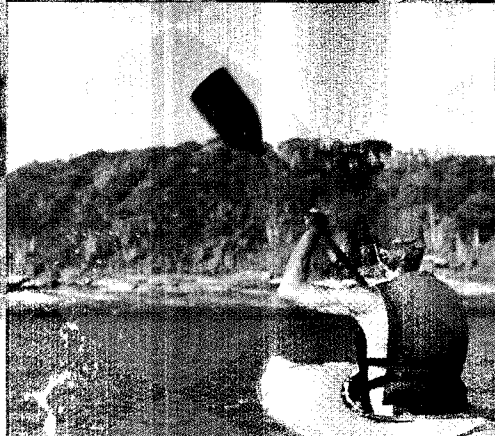
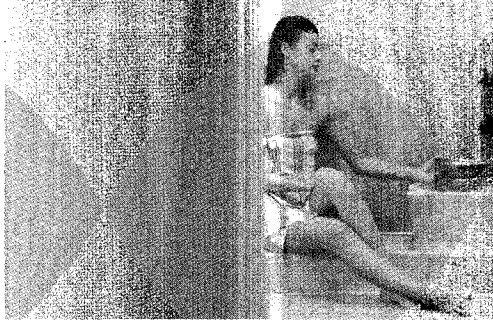
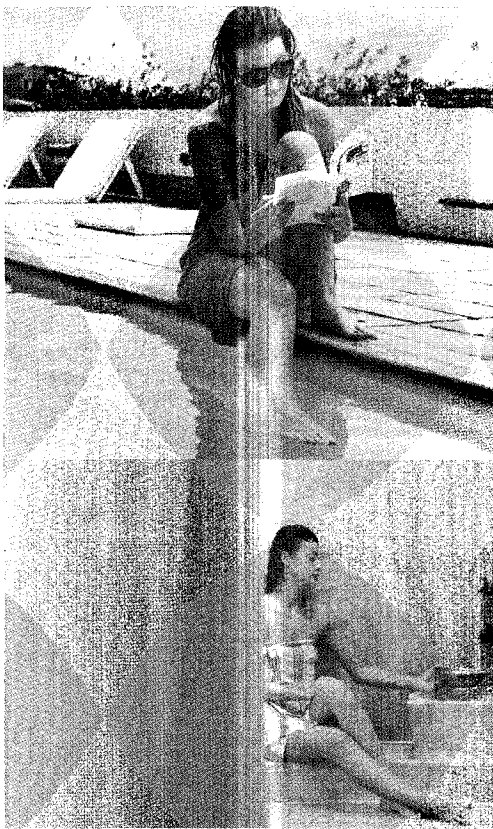
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DESERT RESCUE—MULTIMEDIA

Explore an interactive version of Mark Bowden's cover story, with audio, video, photos, maps, and more

BEINART TALKS BACK

Peter Beinart discusses his new book, *The Good Fight*, and responds to criticism leveled against it by Christopher Hitchens in this issue

COVER

Photo illustration by John Ritter

HEADING AND CALENDAR DRAWINGS

by Istvan Banyai



Make your mark. Join the circle.

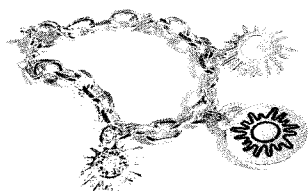
"Women's health issues are very important to me. If I see an opportunity to help out, I'm going to get involved." Mena Suvari is proud to be a part of the American Legacy Foundation's Circle of Friends program, which works to raise awareness of tobacco's toll on women. That's why she wears the Circle of Friends Charm Bracelet — to let others know that she cares about this critical women's health issue. To find out more or to join the Circle with Mena, visit www.join-the-circle.org.

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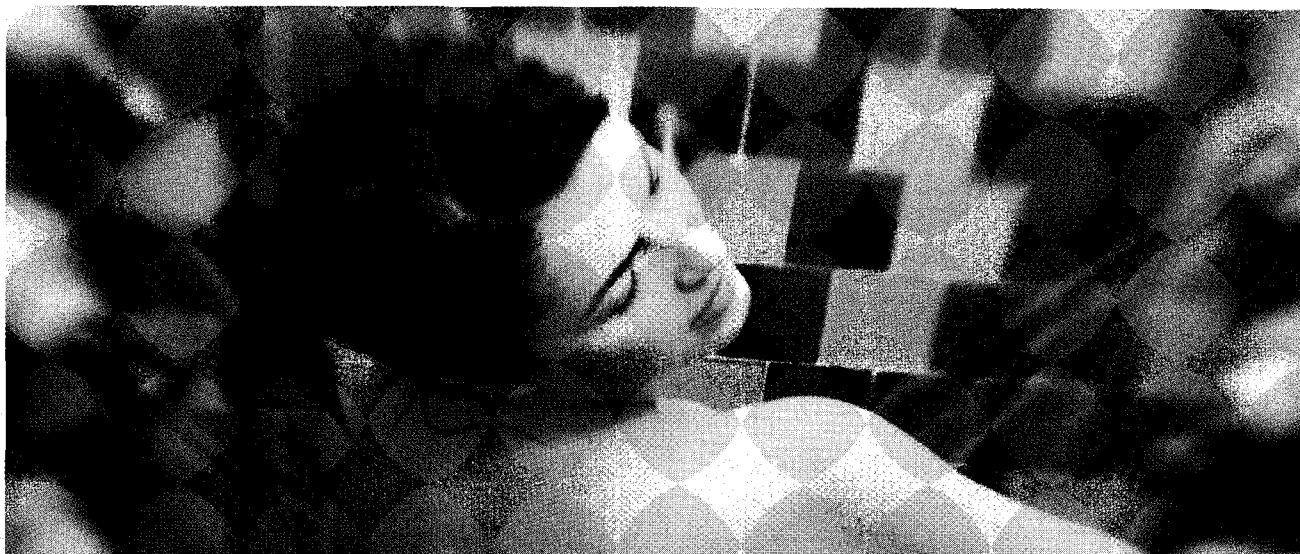


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MAY 1

Duty Swap in Afghanistan

Britain takes command of NATO forces in Afghanistan this month, increasing its force size from 850 to a peak of 5,700 soldiers and concentrating them in the restive south. The United States, which has borne the brunt of the military casualties, will reduce its presence by about 2,500 soldiers (from 19,000). In anticipation of the shift, Afghanistan's president, Hamid Karzai, confronted his Pakistani counterpart, Pervez Musharraf, in February with evidence that insurgents are being trained, equipped, and deployed from Pakistan. Speaking with the backing of Britain and the United States, Karzai said his hope is that Musharraf will crack down and mitigate the attacks.

MAY 11

John Hancocks for Kinky Friedman

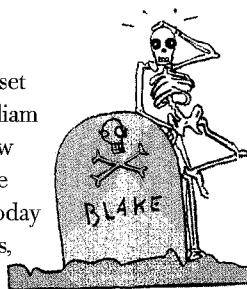
Kinky Friedman, the black-clad, cigar-puffing Jewish country singer-songwriter (who can forget "They Ain't Makin' Jews Like Jesus Any-more"?), is making a serious run for Texas governor on the strength of his wit and

campaign slogans like "Why the hell not?" and "How hard can it be?" His media strategist and campaign director have already led one unlikely populist to a governor's mansion: former pro wrestler Jesse "The Body" Ventura, elected in Minnesota in 1998. Today is the deadline by which Friedman, who's running as an independent, must submit the 45,000 signatures necessary to get himself on the ballot. Naturally, the effort is being filmed for reality TV. The plot is developing nicely: Friedman has raised three times more money than the top two Democrats combined.

MAY 15

Deadline in Washington's Drug War

After today, seniors who sign up for the monstrously complex Medicare prescription-drug benefit will face a penalty: their premium cost will increase at least 1 percent for every month they delay. Democrats aren't about to let the deadline pass quietly. They've made widespread dissatisfaction with the program—initially thought to be a shrewd Republican tactic that would win elderly voters—a central part of this year's congressional campaigns. Along with dubbing the penalty a "complexity tax"



MAY 2

Blake on the Block

In what scholars are calling a tragedy, a set of nineteen watercolors by the poet William Blake—a surprise discovery in a Glasgow secondhand bookstore in 2001—will be split up and individually auctioned off today by Sotheby's in New York. The paintings, commissioned to illustrate "The Grave," a popular eighteenth-century Scottish poem, are typically creepy depictions of boneyards, angels, twisted bodies, and swirling spirits. The works, which were allowed to leave the U.K. after the Tate in Britain failed to beat an offer by a private investor, are expected to fetch a collective \$12 million to \$17.5 million.

CALENDAR

WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN THE WEEKS AHEAD

on the elderly, Democrats will use today's deadline to repeat charges that Republicans, by neglecting to use the government's negotiating power to lower drug costs, favor corporations over seniors.

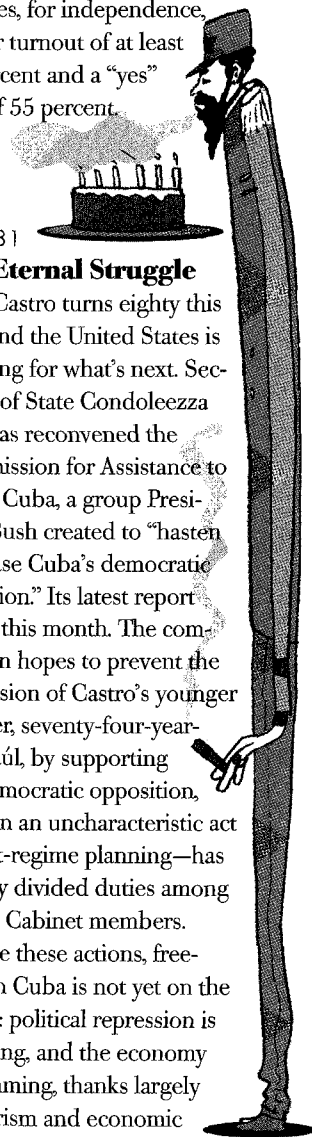


MAY 17

Da Vinci Code, Da Movie

In what's sure to be a frenzy of publicity, the cinematic version of Dan Brown's best-selling book *The Da Vinci Code* opens today at the Cannes Film Festival. The movie's plot, like the book's, centers on Opus Dei, the secretive Catholic organization that, in Brown's story, kills several people to maintain a 2,000-year-old Christian conspiracy. Anticipating controversy, Sony Pictures has provided religious leaders with a Web site to publish rebuttals; Opus Dei has launched a PR campaign; and Random House, which has printed 40 million hardcover copies of the book, will release the North American paperback to coincide with the hype.

approve a new referendum. Since 1992, Montenegro has been the smaller (620,000 of 7.5 million citizens) in a two-state union with Serbia (the name "Yugoslavia" was dropped altogether in 2003). Pro-independence factions, including the current prime minister, Milo Djukanovic, are miffed over a European Union-brokered deal that requires, for independence, a voter turnout of at least 50 percent and a "yes" vote of 55 percent.



MAY 31

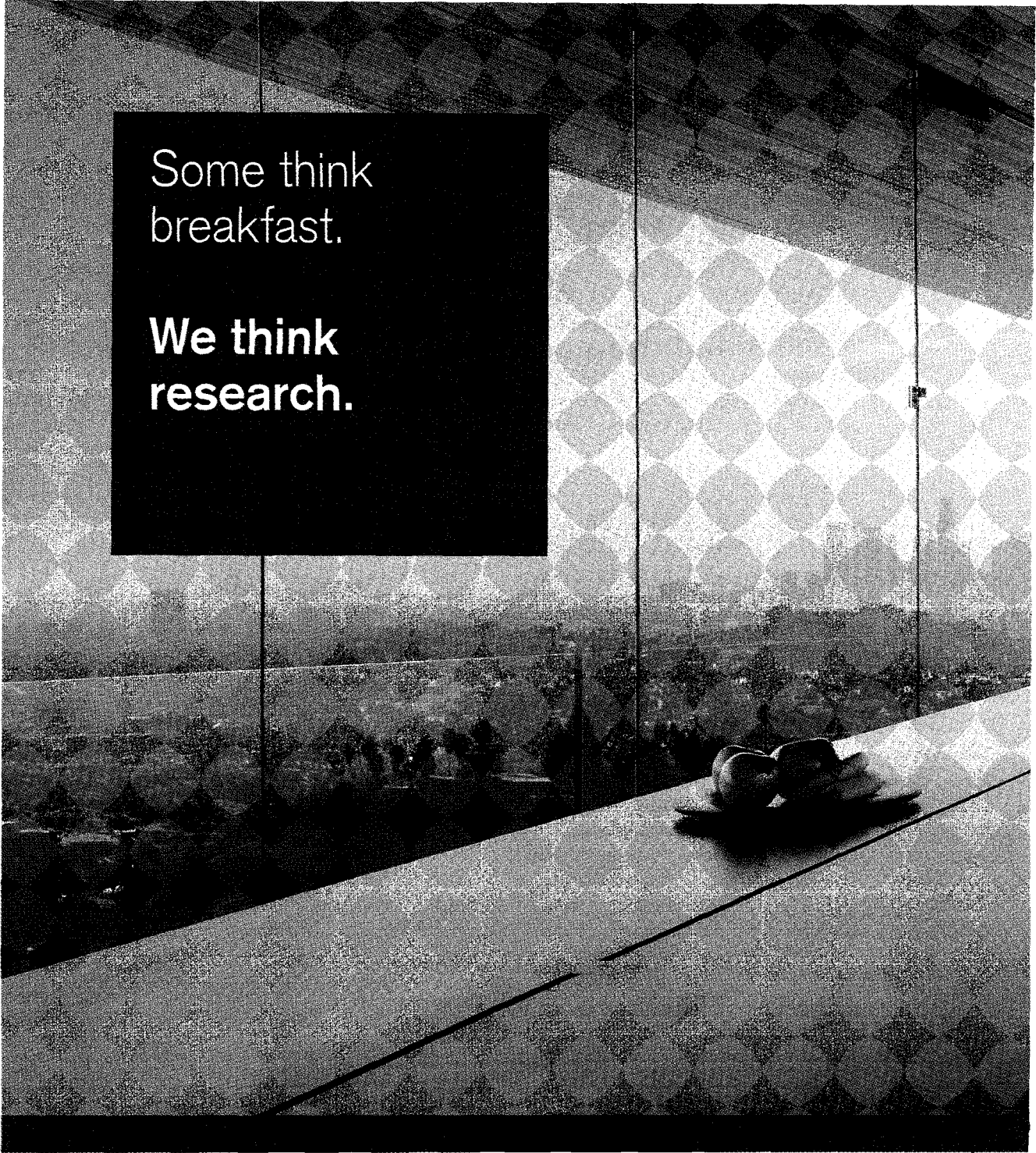
The Eternal Struggle

Fidel Castro turns eighty this year, and the United States is planning for what's next. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has reconvened the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, a group President Bush created to "hasten and ease Cuba's democratic transition." Its latest report is due this month. The commission hopes to prevent the succession of Castro's younger brother, seventy-four-year-old Raúl, by supporting the democratic opposition, and—in an uncharacteristic act of post-regime planning—has already divided duties among Bush's Cabinet members. Despite these actions, freedom in Cuba is not yet on the march: political repression is booming, and the economy is humming, thanks largely to tourism and economic partnerships with socialist Venezuela and communist China.—*Matthew Quirk*

MAY 21

More Balkanization in the Balkans?

Serbia and Montenegro, the last vestige of the old Yugoslav federation, may finally split today. Montenegro, a republic on the Adriatic Sea that hasn't existed independently since 1918, when it joined what would later become Yugoslavia, will regain its sovereignty if voters

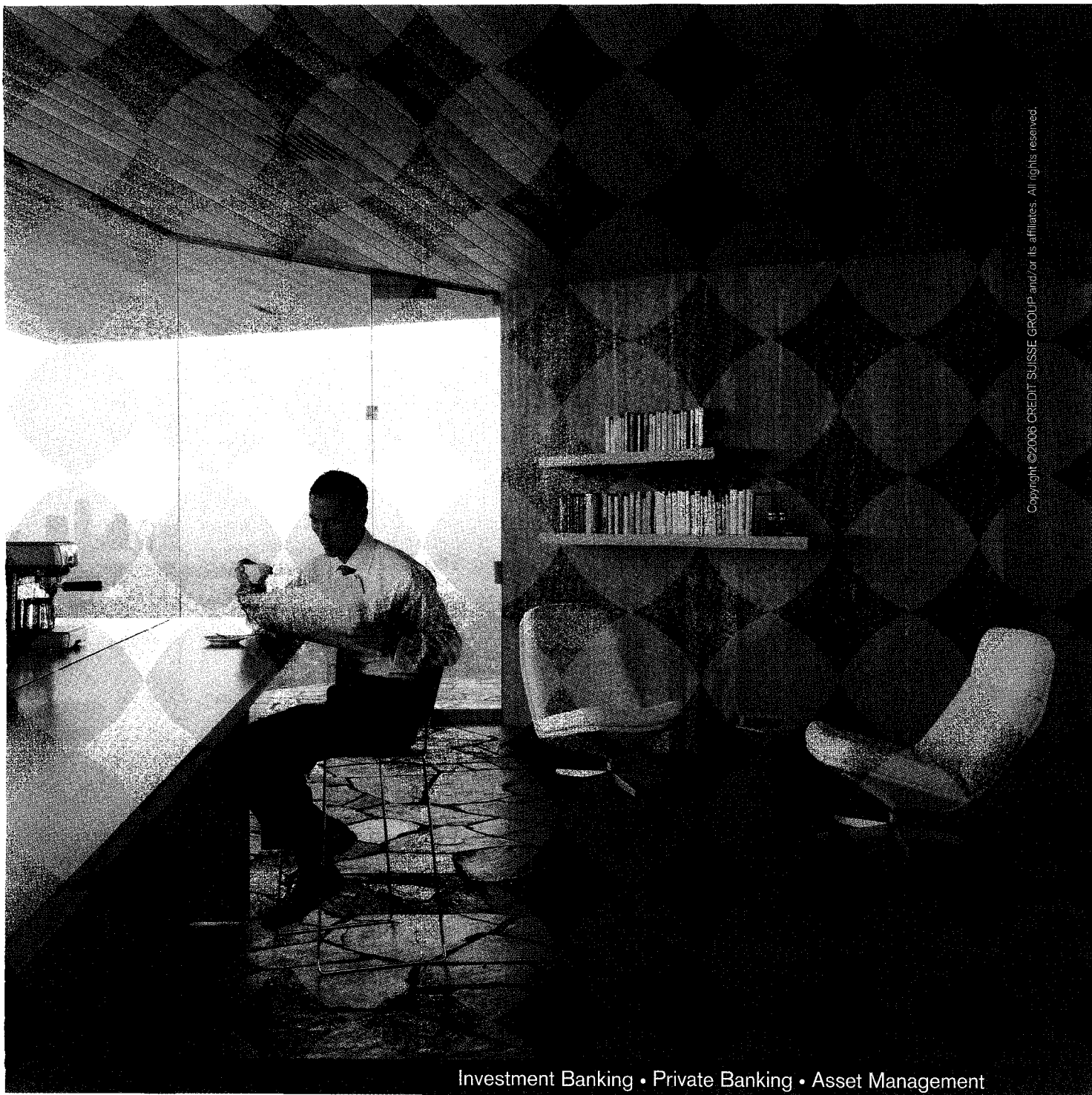


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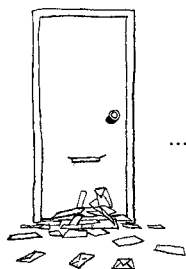


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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The New Science of Love

What a charming idea it is to bring science to the study of match-making—if only the people Lori Gottlieb interviewed (“How Do I Love Thee?” March *Atlantic*) were doing it. It was disheartening to learn that Helen Fisher has uncritically adopted the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, which, scientifically speaking, is no advance over the theory of the four humors. (Come to think of it, why not match choleric people with phlegmatic mates?) One study of the Myers-Briggs found that fewer than half of the respondents scored as the same type only a few weeks later, and there is little evidence to support the test’s key premise: that knowledge of a person’s type reliably predicts behavior on the job or in relationships.

Gottlieb was also caught by one of the oldest cons in the pop-personality biz: the supposed “personality profile.” She took the Duet test and was classified as “Risk Averse, High Energy, Cautious, and Seeks Variety.” (A good rule of thumb is to avoid any test that describes you in Capital Letters, let alone in self-contradictory terms.) “The site then interpreted the findings, which, to my surprise, rather accurately captured my personality,” says Ms. Gottlieb. Well, yes and no. When people believe that a description was written just for them—whether it’s the result of a personality assessment, horoscope, or handwriting analysis—they are always amazed: “It describes me!” So common is this phenomenon that teachers love to demonstrate it in large classrooms—you give your 300 students the identical “profile,” and they all think it was tailor-made for them. Psychologists call this the Barnum Effect, because P. T. Barnum knew you had to “have a

little something for everybody.” The profiles are vague enough to apply to almost everybody, they are flattering, and they incorporate all possibilities.

The two factors that best predict successful matches are awfully low-tech: proximity and similarity. Computer matchers can help people with the latter, but please—can’t we just claim it’s a fun and interesting way for like-minded people to meet, and leave pseudoscientific theories of dopamine and Capital Letters out of it?

Carol Tavris
Social psychologist
Co-author of *Psychology*
Los Angeles, Calif.

While Lori Gottlieb’s article made for interesting reading, I was disappointed that she did not press Neil Clark Warren on his company’s policy of excluding gay and lesbian clients. Although the first Frequently Asked Question listed on the eHarmony Web site is “Why won’t you accept separated members?” nowhere is there an explanation of the assumption that men must only seek women and women must only seek men.

Matthew Peck
Chicago, Ill.

My ardor for *The Atlantic* has diminished considerably since reading Lori Gottlieb’s “How Do I Love Thee?” What was billed as “the new science of love” was in fact a rehashing of the worst sort of pop psychology. I’m sure that many of your readers with a scientific background were startled to discover that personality is completely determined by four or five neurotransmitters; that an anthropologist has determined which genes are responsible for calm, stability, popularity, and religiosity; and that seminal fluid can induce romantic love.

Trust is an essential part of any relationship. Any more articles like this and I’m afraid my long-lasting affair with *The Atlantic* will be over.

Joe Sirott
Seattle, Wash.

Reading Lori Gottlieb’s article, I wondered why, rather than just interviewing dating-service creators, she didn’t interview some of the people who actually used those dating services. Also, in fairness to the dating services, I wish Ms. Gottlieb had dated the three “matches” she got from eHarmony.com. I’d like to see if they, upon further examination, were better matches than she thought, or if her first impressions were accurate.

Jennifer Leaf
Fayetteville, N.C.

Defending Capitalism

Clive Crook’s defense of corporations and free-market capitalism in the United States (“Capitalism: The Movie,” March *Atlantic*) reminds me of Gandhi’s description of Christianity as a wonderful religion—if it could only be put into practice somewhere. Even a cursory glance at the corporations and industries in the United States demonstrates how great the distance is between Crook’s idealized picture of a consumer-dominated marketplace determining winners and losers and the truth of how our society functions. In most areas, the government has forced its way into the picture, distorting any free and open marketplace, usually to protect and subsidize the rich and powerful. In transportation, the railroads initially were given very profitable land, without cost, the airlines received exceptionally profitable air-mail contracts, and the trucking industry depends entirely on the expensive

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national highway system. In agriculture, there are subsidies on top of subsidies on top of tariffs, from sugar to farm parity payments for many commodities. In manufacturing, there are absurd governmental contracts (to Halliburton, Bechtel, etc.), whole industries (airframe manufacture, heavy machinery) that rely on government purchases, and ridiculous protective patents and copyrights. And, of course, the written organs of information (printing and publishing) have never paid their way in the postal marketplace, receiving extraordinary subsidies.

No, it won't wash. The government is in there everywhere, adjusting, regulating, fixing, charging, sponsoring, subsidizing, etc.

*Dr. A. N. Feldzamen
Ithaca, N.Y.*

Why do defenders of capitalism always blithely gloss over the consequences of this system? Clive Crook states that capitalism "creates, or leaves unattended, a host of problems that decent societies must address by other means." But then he fails to enumerate them, or to admit that, for the most part, even "decent" societies never address them adequately. This is mere lip service. Has anyone ever done a serious study on the economic impact of drug addiction, alcoholism, prostitution, crime, divorce, pollution, economic disparity, and psychological illness caused by a capitalist society in appraising its efficiency? And what about the less tangible effects of promoting a rampantly consumerist society, which becomes increasingly shrill, greedy, selfish, and superficial as it endlessly pursues free markets and economic growth? The negative impacts of a capitalist society on human development and well-being are incalculable. While communism surely failed, capitalism represents no triumph.

*Martin Aronson
Oakland, Calif.*

If American culture "radiates suspicion of free enterprise," as Clive Crook contends, it is largely a result of the fact that Americans have chosen socialism as the organizing principle for educating

our young. As Marshall McLuhan put it: "The school system ... has no place for the rugged individual. It is, indeed, the homogenizing hopper into which we toss our integral tots for processing."

Education is a protected monopoly of state and local governments. Instruction naturally favors collective—as opposed to free, individual—enterprise. If Americans fail to appreciate that, as Crook puts it, "what best serves a nation's interest is competition—it's why markets work, when they do," we need look no further than the collectivizing project known as K-12 education. It has made us what we are and explains what we are not.

*Tom Shuford
Lenoir, N.C.*

Enemy Combatants

Injoyed Benjamin Wittes's article ("Justice Delayed," March *Atlantic*), but he did not address a key issue: What if we simply decide to hold all of our prisoners as irregular combatants for the duration of the "War on Terror," regardless of whether they go before some form of tribunal? Nations have often held prisoners for the duration of a conflict. Even if this conflict goes on for decades, why should we release them, considering that many of them might return to fighting against the United States?

*Michael Barron
Oak Park, Ill.*

Benjamin Wittes replies:

Mr. Barron is quite correct that holding enemy combatants without trial for the duration of hostilities is the historical norm. Then again, the historical norm is predicated on the notion that countries fight with each other, not with the individual soldiers they capture, and that they eventually negotiate the end of the conflict. Nobody truly believes that America now has no fight individually with Osama bin Laden or Khalid Sheikh Muhammad. Moreover, our war with al-Qaeda may be a permanent state of affairs; certainly a negotiated end is unthinkable. Given all of this, it seems to me untenable to have no predictable and viable means of trying accused war criminals.

Taiwan's Future

In her article on the upcoming Beijing Olympics ("Dangerous Games," March *Atlantic*), Jennifer Lind asserts that "Taiwanese leaders may gamble that the 2008 Olympics will provide them with their best chance to declare formal independence from [the People's Republic of China]." This is the same sort of dire prediction one often hears from Beijing's state-sanctioned media about the inherent dangers of Taiwan's representative government, and it omits a number of key facts. For instance, while much has been made about the ruling Democratic Progressive Party's pro-independence stance, President Chen Shui-bian has steadfastly adhered to the "Five No's" of his 2000 inaugural speech, in which he proclaimed that absent direct PRC aggression, there would be no unilateral moves toward a formal declaration of independence during his term. And he has kept this promise despite a massive buildup in the number of PRC missiles aimed at Taiwan, and Beijing's unrelenting quest to deny Taiwan any sort of international recognition. It also bears mentioning that according to Taiwanese law, any move toward formal independence or unification must first pass the Legislative Yuan (currently controlled by opposition parties) before being put to a referendum in which over half of Taiwan's registered voters must take part for the results to be valid. In short, any change in the status quo cannot and will not be made without the consent of the people of Taiwan, a fact that is glossed over in Lind's article.

*Eddy Tsai
Director, Press Division
Taipei Economic and Cultural
Representative Office
Washington, D.C.*

Jennifer Lind replies:

Mr. Tsai emphasizes the institutional and political obstacles to a formal declaration of independence. But it's far more likely that Taiwanese leaders would employ "salami tactics"—a series of subtle shifts toward autonomy—that require Beijing to choose between greater Taiwanese independence and the use of military force. And it is ironic



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that Mr. Tsai claims that Chen has “steadfastly adhered” to the “Five No’s,” his promise to avoid making various moves toward independence. In February, the Taiwanese president unilaterally rescinded one of the “Five No’s,” abolishing the National Unification Council, despite polls registering overwhelming support to maintain the status quo. When Beijing and Washington protested this step, Chen said the council was not being “abolished” but, rather, would “cease to function.” These are the sort of word games and subtle measures that political leaders use when they wish to bypass institutional constraints. Caution may still prevail in Taipei, but now we’re at “Four No’s” and counting.

The Year of Two Popes

In his article “The Year of Two Popes” (January/February *Atlantic*), Paul Elie incorrectly asserts that “when John Paul seemed to declare the restriction of the ordained ministry to men an infallible teaching, for example, [Joseph] Ratzinger, though no supporter of a more open priesthood, made clear that this was not permissible.” I would point Mr. Elie to then-Cardinal Ratzinger’s 1995 response to *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (the papal document reaffirming that only men could be validly ordained), in which he wrote the following:

This teaching requires definitive assent, since, founded on the written Word of God, and from the beginning constantly preserved and applied in the Tradition of the Church, it has been set forth infallibly by the ordinary and universal Magisterium (cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* 25, 2). Thus, in the present circumstances, the Roman Pontiff, exercising his proper office of confirming the brethren (cf. Lk 22:32), has handed on this same teaching by a formal declaration, explicitly stating what is to be held always, everywhere, and by all, as belonging to the deposit of the faith.

Despite the various forms of revisionist history applied to Cardinal Ratzinger’s tenure as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith since his election as pope, the record should be clear: Cardinal Ratzinger did not declare that the pope’s assertion was not permissible.

On the contrary, one rather suspects that he authored the original text of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* as well.

Catharine A. Henningsen
Rye Brook, N.Y.

Paul Elie responds:

It is hard to tell whether Ms. Henningsen read the passage in question too closely or not closely enough. As she points out, Cardinal Ratzinger wrote in support of John Paul’s declaration in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* that the ordained ministry is restricted to men, and as she suggests, in all likelihood Ratzinger had a hand in the drafting of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* itself. The story my sources tell (not an uncommon one) is that John Paul wished to define the restriction of the ordained ministry to men through an “*ex cathedra*” pronouncement—the kind of pronouncement considered infallible by its very nature—but that Ratzinger warned him off this approach for theological reasons. Instead, Ratzinger devised the approach taken in *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, in which all the “ordinary and universal” teachings of the Catholic Church are affirmed to be infallible in a general way. This method of finessing the issue drew the charge of “creeping infallibilism.” In any case, the documents support the point I made in the article: that John Paul, aware of Ratzinger’s skills as a theologian, made “heavy use of him,” trusting him to attend to the details and even to correct him when necessary.

Iraq and the Insurgency

In “Man Versus Mine” (January/February *Atlantic*), Robert Bryce manages to contort a single statistic—65 percent of U.S. combat deaths in Iraq are due to mines/IEDs (improvised explosive devices)—into a recipe for American defeat. He never considers a reasonable alternative explanation for this unusual statistic—namely, that Iraqi insurgents simply lack the capability to inflict significant casualties on Americans without using mines.

There is little doubt that modern wireless technology has made mines more effective, but Bryce badly overstates his case. He notes, for example, that only 9 percent of American com-

bat deaths in Vietnam in 1967 were due to mines. That year, American forces suffered approximately 9,400 combat deaths, with about three times the forces we have engaged in Iraq. Adjusting for the size of our Iraq force, that figure is the equivalent of about 3,100 combat deaths. Of these, according to the author’s 9 percent figure, approximately 300 combat deaths would have been due to mines. In reality, American forces suffered 845 combat deaths in Iraq during 2004, of which, according to Bryce, about 550 were due to mines. This is a significant increase, but the article implies a difference in orders of magnitude rather than an arithmetic progression. Per the size of the force engaged (the only thing that really matters), mines are only marginally more dangerous to American forces in Iraq than they were in Vietnam.

More significantly, in Vietnam (and previous conflicts) the enemy forces were able to inflict casualties on American forces at a much higher rate than in Iraq. They accomplished this with a wider variety of weapons and a much broader range of tactics than Iraqi insurgents. Communist forces in Vietnam pressed offensives, successfully ambushed large American units, besieged American bases, and denied allied forces access to entire provinces. But other than suicide-bomb attacks against the civilian populace and mine attacks on American supply lines, Iraqi insurgents can only inflict significant casualties on American forces when we choose to attack them, as at Fallujah in 2004. And then they can count on taking greatly disproportionate casualties.

Bryce also makes a number of factual errors. He notes the Iraqi use of shaped charges in mines, and claims that these “fire armor-piercing conical projectiles.” While armor-piercing projectiles (like rocket-propelled grenades, or RPCs) might have a shaped charge, when used in a mine it is the charge itself that is cone-shaped. The mine, like all mines, remains immobile, and its effect is entirely dependent on a vehicle rolling over it (or right next to it). Bryce says that foot patrols might deter mine operations, but then notes that a Marine foot patrol suffered ten dead when it was



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hit by a mine in December 2005. In fact, the Marines were attending a promotion ceremony, in a dangerous area, and were sitting ducks. He asserts that IEDs are forcing "America's military strategists to rethink centuries of military doctrine holding that in warfare, mobility equals dominance." Any serious military strategist knows that military dominance requires a balance of mobility, firepower, and protection. And besides, even if this formulation were correct, it is the insurgents who are essentially immobile, not American forces.

In his conclusion, Bryce solicits the opinion of William Lind, a controversial military theorist who is a vociferous opponent of the war in Iraq and a harsh critic of the Pentagon. Lind's claim that Iraqi insurgents are "untargetable" is just false. We target and hit them all the time. It is American forces that are difficult for the insurgents to target, save by placing immobile mines along roadways. To use Bryce's own example, T. E. Lawrence mined Ottoman rail lines as an adjunct to mobile raiding with an army, and he had British conventional forces operating in support of him. Iraqi insurgents lack such operational mobility and support. They can only effectively hit American forces with mines.

Can we lose the war in Iraq? Of course, especially if the American people lose confidence in our effort there. But what better way to shatter the public's confidence than with careless reporting and tendentious analysis?

*Jonathan F. Keiler
Bowie, Md.*

I was astonished to read, on page 37 of the January/February issue, Benjamin Schwarz's acceptance ("The Perils of Primacy") of the Pentagon's assertion that U.S. "military preponderance now embraces the entire 'spectrum of conflict' ... [such that] we're miles ahead of everyone in every type of warfare," and then, seven pages later, Robert Bryce's assertion that "military analysts and active-duty soldiers doubt that the threat posed by IEDs can be neutralized anytime soon."

Leaving aside the apparent editorial oversight in allowing these contra-

dictory statements to appear virtually side by side in the magazine, it is a frightening notion that the U.S. military—supposedly the best-trained, best-equipped fighting force in the history of the world—is severely threatened by and incapable of defeating a disorganized, underfunded, non-statist group of random individuals armed only with homemade bombs. It's a crime against U.S. taxpayers, and a testament to the incompetence of the war's planners, that all our multimillion-dollar missiles, planes, ships, tanks, and the rest are useless against a hundred dollars' worth of wires and dynamite.

*Paul Tullis
New York, N.Y.*

Robert Bryce's article makes two things clear: the U.S. military is still fixated on technology to the exclusion of anything else to solve tactical problems, and it still doesn't understand counterinsurgency. The only way to defeat IEDs is by using clear-and-hold tactics and by controlling the population along the roads.

After the traumatic experience of Vietnam, the U.S. military quietly erased from its institutional memory the hard-won counterinsurgency techniques learned in the 1950s and 1960s by the British and French. Until it relearns these mid-twentieth-century concepts and adapts them to the twenty-first-century struggles in Iraq and Afghanistan, young Americans will continue to be killed and maimed needlessly in fruitless convoys and mounted patrols.

*Lieutenant Colonel Terence J. Daly,
U.S. Army Reserves (Retired)
San Francisco, Calif.*

Robert Bryce replies:

Mr. Keiler points out that America isn't losing as many soldiers (on a proportional basis) in Iraq as we did in Vietnam. True. But he cannot refute the fact that the percentage of Americans killed or injured by IEDs in Iraq exceeds anything ever seen before. The latest Army statistics show that four times more GIs are being hurt by explosions (i.e., IEDs, RPGs, etc.) than by gunshots. For all his indignant fury, Keiler ignores the main effect that IEDs have had on the U.S.

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military in Iraq: they have forced the Defense Department into a reactive mode, forced it to spend billions of dollars on countermeasures—armor, high-tech sensors, etc.—and still our soldiers are being blown up on an almost daily basis. The crux of Keiler's attack hangs on his contention that the insurgents are unable to cause "significant casualties" on American forces by using IEDs. Hundreds of American soldiers have been killed by IEDs, and thousands have been wounded by them. By any definition, that's "significant."

Teen Sexuality

Caitlin Flanagan's "Are You There God? It's Me, Monica" (January/February *Atlantic*) grossly misrepresents Planned Parenthood's Web site *teenwire.com*, an online resource dedicated to providing medically accurate, nonjudgmental information about sexuality for teens. Flanagan wrongly claims that the site teaches teens how to have oral and other kinds of sex. *Teenwire.com* does not promote any type of sexual activity. We provide teens with medically accurate, age-appropriate information to help them make responsible decisions about whether or when to have sex and how to protect themselves if they choose to be sexually active.

Sexual expression is a lifelong part of human development. Planned Parenthood's mission, which we further through *teenwire.com* and resources and services for parents, teens, and adults, is to ensure that people have the information and health-care services they need to make responsible, healthy decisions.

Karen Pearl

Interim President

*Planned Parenthood Federation of America
New York, N.Y.*

As a psychiatrist working in the area of sexuality, I share Caitlin Flanagan's concern for "America's girls." However, her assertion that her sons are less likely to be emotionally wounded by intense, casual early sexual experience than someone else's daughters is wishful thinking. America's boys are growing up in a hypersexualized culture with unprecedented access to both real and virtual

sexual experiences. The astounding array of sexual material available on the Internet tends to make abnormal behaviors appear normal. Intense sexual experiences at a young age can reinforce behavior that can become entrenched in adulthood. What could be the outcome for "America's boys"? It is troubling to imagine how the themes of sadism, voyeurism, and exhibitionism inherent in the oral-sex craze could develop into the basis for their adult sexuality. It is even more troubling to consider how this might affect the future of relationships, marriage, and the family.

Dr. Kristine Campbell

Beachwood, Ohio

Far from being an indictment of feminism's success, a teenage blowjob explosion would point to the distance we still have to travel—as parents, as communities, as a culture—in ensuring that adolescents and adults develop healthy emotional and physical relationships with themselves and with others, in which girls view their own sexual gratification as a priority on par with that of their partners.

But I think Caitlin Flanagan isn't actually all that worried about the particulars of the pseudo-epidemic—not the subordination of female desire or pleasure, the risk (though comparatively minimal) of disease, or anything else. Her objection, really, seems to be to the *immodesty* of casual sexual encounters in general. Flanagan creates these imaginary school-supply-closet trysts—rendering them in lurid detail—in order to set up a false choice: if it's being treated like glass or treated like dirt, most of us would choose glass. But both deny women and girls full personhood, and so neither is an acceptable option. In the end, Flanagan misses a very basic feminist insight: the continuing fight for gender equality is about refusing to dwell on pedestals or on our knees. All it's about is existence, for all of us, at eye level.

Kate Shaw

Chicago, Ill.

Caitlin Flanagan replies:

My mother was a lifelong, passionate supporter of Planned Parenthood, and the one time—very long ago—that I had need to

visit one of the organization's clinics, I was treated with surpassing kindness. Until very recently, I sent the occasional small check to the New York headquarters, my mother's name written on the memo line. It does not come easily to me to stand against Planned Parenthood in any way.

*But one of the reasons the organization was founded was to protect children, to ensure that they were born into families in which they could be amply provided for and nurtured. Margaret Sanger cared about the quality of children's lives, and so do I. What Planned Parenthood's new president finds "age-appropriate" I find morally repugnant. Whoever is writing the copy for *teenwire.com* clearly has an abiding and vivid interest in the sex play of minors. The site instructs kids on anal and oral sex; it tells boys that they can reduce nocturnal emissions by engaging in sex play with a partner; it includes a glossary of slang terms, which I have no desire to repeat here. Children are welcome to address questions to the *teenwire.com* experts. One had been asked to engage in cyber sex, but didn't know what it was or how to do it. *Teenwire.com* helpfully gave her the 411. A fifteen-year-old girl seeking to initiate a sexual relationship with a twenty-year-old man was told that some states have "double standards" about this sort of thing, and that she should "Call the office of the attorney general in [her] state to find out what the laws are there" to learn if the liaison is legal. Clearly, the organization has developed a new mission, one that includes participating in the increasing sexualization of our nation's youth and performing a role best described as "sexual advocacy."*

"Against the State, against the Church, against the silence of the medical profession," Margaret Sanger wrote, "the woman today arises." What the Planned Parenthood of my youth offered to me and to millions of other young women wasn't just contraception; it was something more along the lines of human dignity. An organization that receives 32 percent of its funding from the federal government, whose Web site advises teenyboppers to try chocolate condoms to make oral sex more fun, doesn't give us or our children dignity, or anything like it. It reduces the noblest of causes to something squalid—or worse, something shameful.

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The Border

"The Border" (January/February *Atlantic*), by Ross Douthat and Jenny Woodson, included this statement: "And securing the border may not be feasible no matter what the public wants—at least absent a heavy military presence and the sorts of barriers used in Cold War Berlin and the Korean DMZ."

Nonsense. Remember how intractable the problems of crime, squeegee guys, and graffiti were in New York in the late 1980s and early 1990s? As long as the bad guys were convinced that no enforcement would take place, they were emboldened. But as soon as the political will appeared, the fix wasn't that hard.

In the case of illegal immigration, there's actually proof that enforcement wouldn't be that difficult. In the spring and summer of 2004, the Temecula Border Patrol station formed a special Mobile Patrol Group that conducted a series of illegal-alien sweeps in Norco, Corona, and Escondido, California. The twelve-man group made more than 450 arrests as a result of the roundups. After complaints from illegal aliens and their lobbyists, the program was scrapped. But if that could be accomplished by twelve agents in a month or two, imagine what a scaled-up version would look like. A few thousand agents doing interior enforcement, combined with mandatory workplace employment verification using the payroll records of the Social Security Administration, would cause millions to self-deport.

Jim Hemenway
San Ramon, Calif.

National Anthems

I was struck—as I'm sure many were—by the acute irony of Garrison Keillor's "Anthem" (January/February *Atlantic*). The idea of well-established, nationally recognized poets writing our national anthem seems absurd, bemusing. But why? After all, Australia's leading poet, Les Murray, was commissioned recently to rewrite the country's national pledge of allegiance. If we look to Australia, then, we see an amalgamation of

two spheres—high art and high politics—that are, in the United States, typically regarded as polar opposites.

"The Star-Spangled Banner," to its credit, is a lovely song about the strength of our nation. But it is a lovely song written by a lawyer, and it is representative of an 1812 America. That is, when we sing it, we salute a nation that is, even with our young history, archaic; we sing to a nation of white-male decision-makers, and we sing to a union that was not yet composed of all her states.

I understand that "The Star-Spangled Banner" speaks to a kind of sustainability and longevity, and that we cannot very well go changing our national anthem with each whim or passion that might afflict us; we would appear too malleable in our convictions. But even so, in light of some of the monumental national changes we have experienced over the past 194 years, perhaps a new anthem should be devised.

Shawna MacLeod
Cambridge, Mass.

Garrison Keillor replies:

It's a bold idea, dear reader, to suggest that someone write a new national anthem, but there's nobody who could do it, and only a fool would try. Think about the poems written for inaugurations: they all got decent burials, and nobody will ever read them again. Francis Scott Key's magnificent poem isn't about national power and triumph; it's about survival, and that is its brilliance as a national anthem—so much is left unsaid. The song has been abused by aging divas and faded pop stars and every soloist who ever sang it, but when it's put in the people's key and sung by a crowd, it's thrilling. People think they don't know the words, but they do. You come to "land of the free" and the sopranos rise up like angels, and the "home of the brave" is majestic, and everybody feels great at the end.

Advice and Consent

I only understood the underwhelming nature of Alex Beam's piece on Nova Scotia ("Nova Scotia, Mon Amour," January/February *Atlantic*) when I reached the end, where he admits that "it is a treasure I would prefer to keep to myself." He cleverly attempts

to thwart arrival by land when he, no doubt deliberately, mixes Saint John, New Brunswick, and St. John's, Newfoundland, to give us St. John, New Brunswick. He is right that it is a more cumbersome option to take the ferry from there, but he neglects to mention that one can simply bypass Saint John and drive two hours to Nova Scotia without ever getting on a boat or staying over. Or, you could fly.

So we're not that inaccessible, but that'll be our secret, Alex.

Gregg Yeadon
Halifax, Nova Scotia

I couldn't get beyond the first page of Christopher Hitchens's book review ("What's Left?" March *Atlantic*) without first turning back eighty pages to the item in Primary Sources ("Strunk and White's Revenge") about thesaurus overuse by "insecure writers." It gave me a chuckle. "Polymathic," "meretricious," "etiolated"?! Does Hitchens use a thesaurus? Is Hitchens a thesaurus?

Bart Vinik
Worcester, Mass.

I was glad to see my first and most recent books—*The World of Henry Orient* and *Coast to Coast*—mentioned together in Sally Singer's piece "Mommies Dearest" (January/February *Atlantic*).

But for fans of *Henry Orient*, book or movie, it's time to come clean. The narrator (me) of *Coast* is one and the same as the narrator of *Henry*, Marian (also me). Val fell in love with Henry, but she never went to Hollywood.

Nora Johnson
Tavernier, Fla.

Bruce McCall—along with about a thousand writers, editors, and proofreaders—confuses "shimmy" with "shimmy" ("Not Conspicuously Intelligent Design," March *Atlantic*). To "shimmy" or "shimmy" up a tree or pole is to pull oneself up with the arms while supporting oneself with the shins. A "shimmy" is a violent back-and-forth vibration, dangerous in a car's steering mechanism but allegedly attractive in "my sister Kate," according to the song.

Don Schmiedel
Las Vegas, Nev.

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COMMENT

The Nuclear Power Beside Iraq

Now that Iran unquestionably intends to build a nuclear bomb, the international community has few options to stop it—and the worst option would be a military strike

BY JAMES FALLOWS

A year and a half ago, Iran's nuclear ambition constituted a threat but not yet a world crisis. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had not yet been elected president of the country, nor begun his declarations that the Holocaust never occurred and that modern Israel must be "wiped from the map." The mullah-dominated Iranian government was still evasive and uncooperative rather than flatly defiant when the United States and Europe demanded supervision of its nuclear programs by the International Atomic Energy Agency. It might even look favorably on the face-saving compromise the Russian government talked about, under which Iranians could build just about any nuclear power plant they wanted, thereby satisfying their announced desire to move beyond reliance on oil—as long as they left the reprocessing and enrichment of spent fuel, and therefore the potential for building nuclear weapons, in Russian hands on Russian soil.

It was at this time, in September 2004, that *The Atlantic* sponsored a "war game" to consider what choices the United States might have if the Iranian problem built to a crisis. War games are not a staple of this magazine's operation, but in light of difficulties in Iraq, we wanted to play out the long-term implications of possible U.S. moves and Iranian countermoves. So under the guidance of Sam Gardiner, a retired Air Force colonel who had conducted many real-world war games for the Pentagon, including those that shaped U.S. strategy for the first Gulf War, we assembled a panel of experts to ask "What then?" about the ways in which the United States might threaten, pressure, or entice the Iranians not to build a bomb. Some had been for and some against the invasion of Iraq; all had served in the Pentagon, intelligence agencies, or other parts of the nation's security apparatus, and many had dealt directly with Iran.

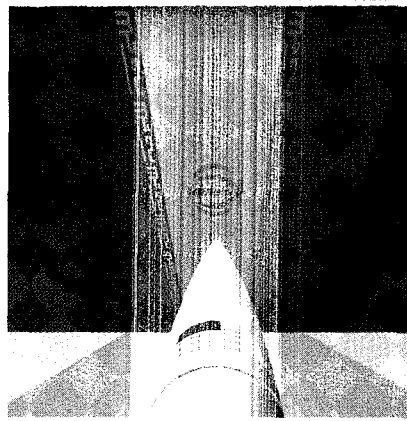
The experts disagreed on some details but were nearly unanimous on one crucial point: what might seem America's ace in the hole—the ability to destroy Iran's nuclear installations in a pre-emptive air strike—was a fantasy. When exposed to "What then?" analysis, this plan (or a variant in which the United States looked the other way while Israel did the job) held more dangers than rewards for the United States. How could this be, given America's crushing strength and wealth relative to

Iran's? There were three main problems:

- The United States was too late. Iran's leaders had learned from what happened to Saddam Hussein in 1981, when Israeli F-16s destroyed a facility at Osirak where most of his nuclear projects were concentrated. Iran spread its research to at least a dozen sites—exactly how many, and where, the U.S. government could not be sure.
- The United States was too vulnerable. Iran, until now relatively restrained in using its influence among the Iraqi Shiites, “could make Iraq hell,” in the words of one of our experts, Kenneth Pollack, of the Brookings Institution. It could use its influence on the world's oil markets to shock Western economies—most of all, that of the world's largest oil importer, the United States.
- The plan was likely to backfire, in a grand-strategy sense. At best, it would slow Iranian nuclear projects by a few years. But the cost of buying that time would likely be a redoubling of Iran's determination to get a bomb—and an increase in its bitterness toward the United States.

That was the situation nearly two years ago. Everything that has changed since then increases the pressure on the United States to choose the “military option” of a pre-emptive strike—and makes that option more ruinously self-defeating.

About Iran's intention to build a bomb, there is no serious disagreement among Russia, China, France, and the United States. Iran has dropped its pretense of benign intent. It refused the compromise that Russia formally proposed late in 2005 (though a new round of negotiations was announced early in March). Last year's elections, the most democratic in that nation's history, transformed the leadership—by making it more anti-Western and harder-edged. The attainment of an Iranian bomb might provoke Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and other neighboring countries to begin nuclear programs of their own, and might make the terrorist groups Iran supports throughout the region feel they can attack with greater impu-



nity. Dealing with Iran is now considered an international crisis.

As it has watched Iran's evolution, the United States has delivered more and more studied warnings that “all options remain open”—code to the Iranians that they should worry about an attack. In different ways, George W. Bush and two aspiring successors, John McCain and Hillary Clinton, have expressed this view. Government officials in Israel have been more explicit still, with the defense minister saying that Israel “will not accept” Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons. Intellectuals, activists, and out-of-power politicians from Newt Gingrich to Benjamin Netanyahu have all urged their leaders to stand firm.

The biggest change has been in what Soviet strategists used to call the “correlation of forces.” Every tool at Iran's disposal is now more powerful, and every complication for the United States worse, than when our war-gamers determined that a pre-emptive strike could not succeed.

Iran has used the passing time to disperse, diversify, conceal, and protect its nuclear centers. Instead of a dozen or so potential sites that would have to be destroyed, it now has at least twice that many. The Shiite dominance of Iraq's new government and military has consolidated, and the ties between the Shiites of Iran and those of Iraq have grown more intense. Early this year, the Iraqi Shiite warlord Muqtada al-Sadr suggested that he would turn his Mahdi Army against Americans if they attacked Iran.

Economically, Iran also has far greater leverage than before. Through 2004, the price of a barrel of oil averaged less than \$40. In 2006, it has been above \$60, an increase of more than

50 percent. Rising demand from China, India, and, yes, the United States has left virtually no slack in the world's oil markets. OPEC's “spare” production capacity—the amount it could quickly supply beyond current demand—is about 1 million barrels a day. Iran now supplies about 4 million barrels a day. If it chose to, or had to, remove much of its oil from the market, a bidding war could send the price of a barrel of oil above \$100. Eventually, everyone would adjust. Eventually, the Great Depression ended.

Perhaps the American and Israeli hard-liners know all this, and are merely bluffing. If so, they have made an elementary strategic error. The target of their bluff is the Iranian government, and the most effective warnings would be discreet and back-channel. Iranian intelligence should be picking up *secret* signals that the United States is planning an attack. By giving public warnings, the United States and Israel “create ‘excess demand’ for military action,” as our war-game leader Sam Cardiner recently put it, and constrain their own negotiating choices.

The inconvenient truth of American foreign policy is that the last five years have left us with a series of choices—and all of them are bad. The United States can't keep troops in Iraq indefinitely, for obvious reasons. It can't withdraw them, because of the chaos that would ensue. The United States can't keep prisoners at Guantánamo Bay (and other overseas facilities) indefinitely, because of international and domestic challenges. But it can't hastily release them, since many were and more have become terrorists. And it can't even bring them to trial, because of procedural abuses that have already occurred. Similarly, the United States can't accept Iran's emergence as a nuclear power, but it cannot prevent this through military means—unless it is willing to commit itself to all-out war.

The central flaw of American foreign policy these last few years has been the triumph of hope, wishful thinking, and self-delusion over realism and practicality. Realism about Iran starts with throwing out any plans to bomb. ▀

James Fallows is a national correspondent for The Atlantic.

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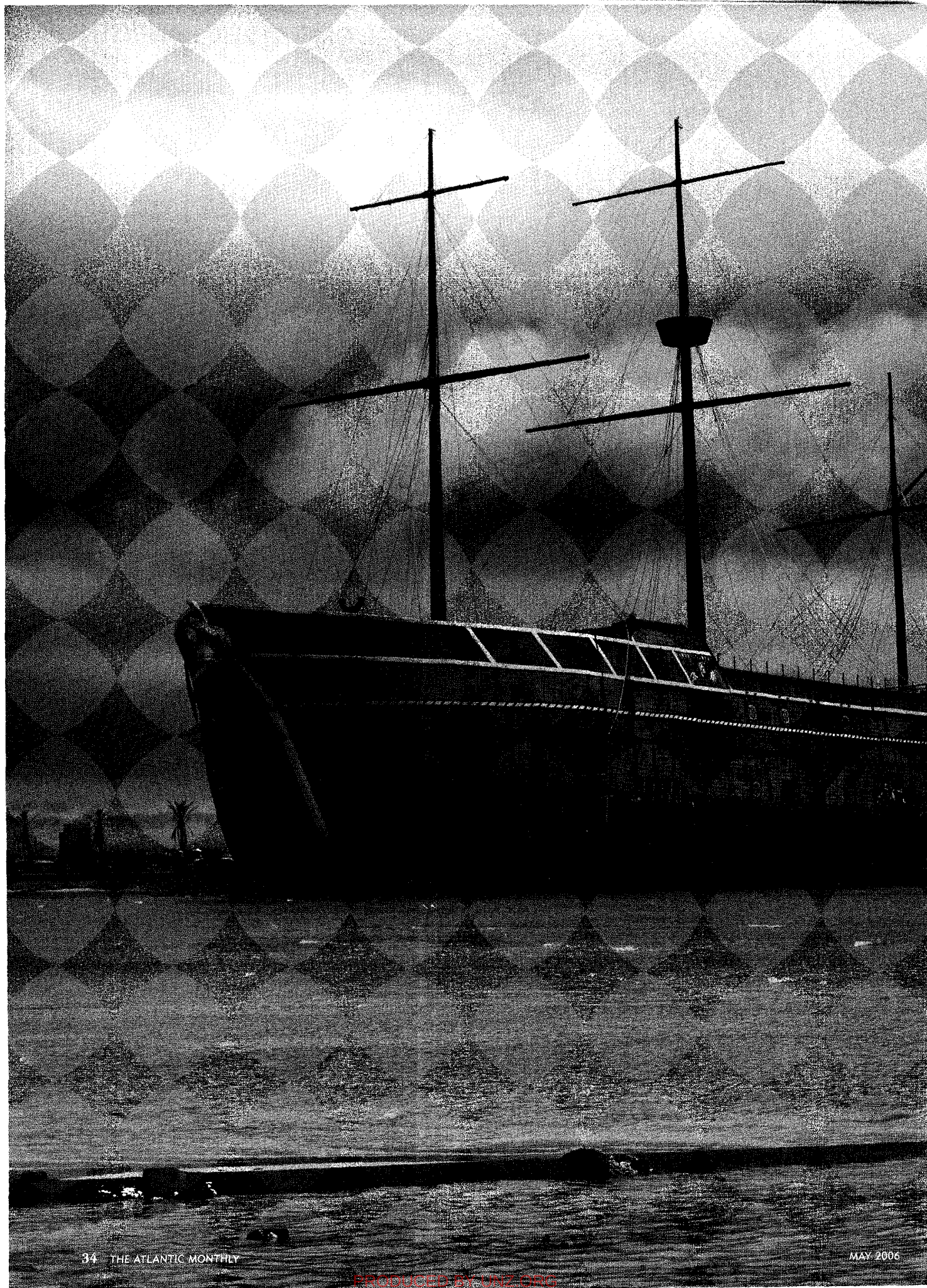
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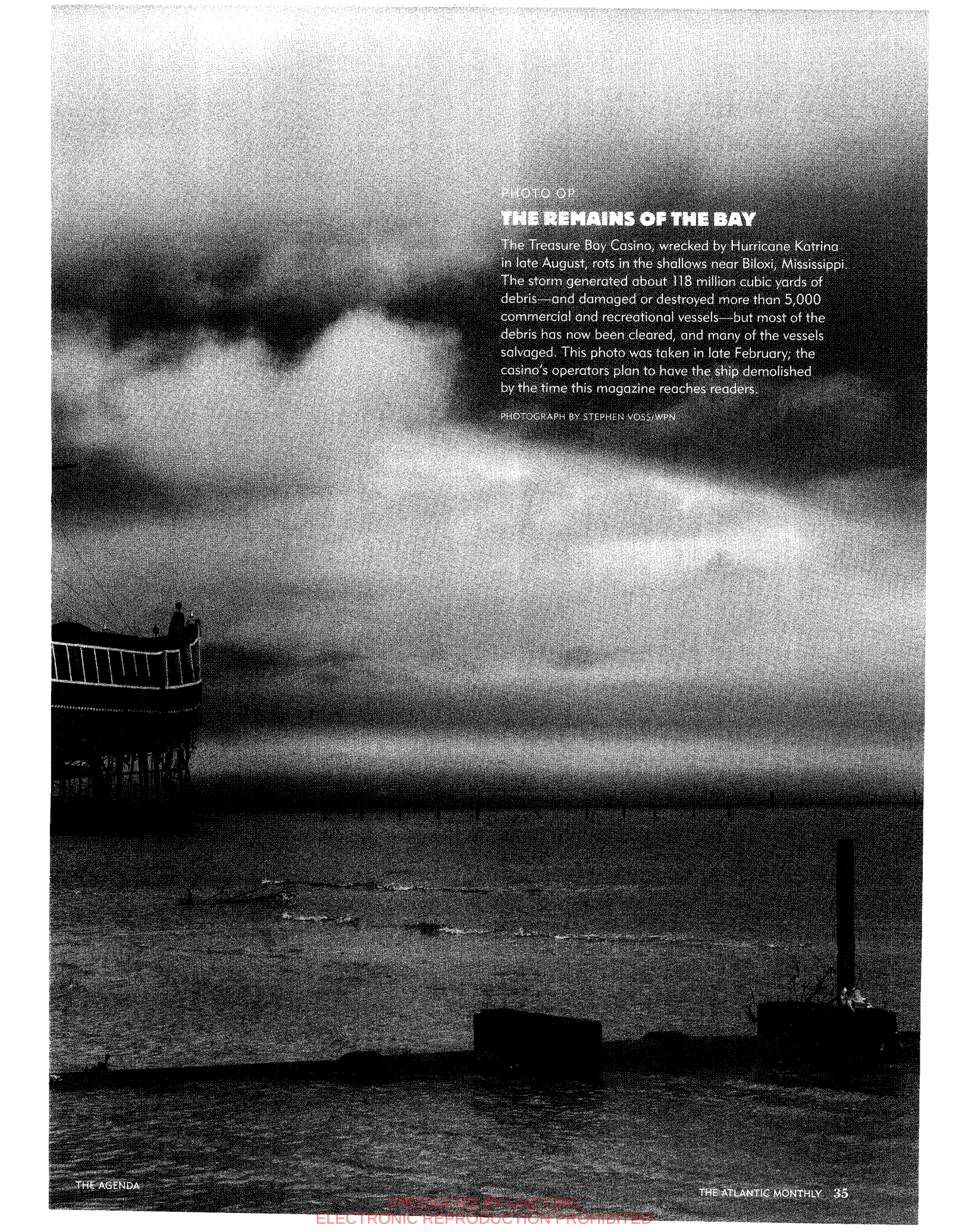


PHOTO OP

THE REMAINS OF THE BAY

The Treasure Bay Casino, wrecked by Hurricane Katrina in late August, rots in the shallows near Biloxi, Mississippi. The storm generated about 118 million cubic yards of debris—and damaged or destroyed more than 5,000 commercial and recreational vessels—but most of the debris has now been cleared, and many of the vessels salvaged. This photo was taken in late February; the casino's operators plan to have the ship demolished by the time this magazine reaches readers.

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHEN VOSS/WPN

The Numbers War

In Washington, measuring the changing size of the Iraqi insurgency has become the battle to watch

BY JOSHUA GREEN

One of the central dramas in Washington this year is how the expected drawdown of U.S. troops in Iraq will affect voters. What's vexing for President Bush and the Republicans is that their political problem with Iraq has come to match the military one: things look like they're getting worse, not better. The tension between Bush's many public assurances of success in Iraq and the public's evolving perception that the insurgency is growing, not shrinking, could determine the party's fate in November.

The current tension over the insurgency's size is the product of a hazy understanding of the insurgent threat, coupled with the desire of pro-war politicians to portray Iraq as a success. Statistics, no matter how shaky their connection to underlying reality, are something politicians love. Impressively arranged numbers help bolster claims about anything from budget deficits to the insurgency's "last throes." But such data have a way of supplying a false—and in this case very perishable—sense of authority.

Until recently, honest discussion about the insurgency's scope and force has, for several reasons, been limited. It is difficult to measure the resistance with any real precision. The administration would prefer to downplay its very existence, since it repudiates their promises of a quick victory. And the usual bearers of bad news about the president—Democrats—either oppose the war or have no better plan for prosecuting it; they have nothing to gain by drawing attention to a fact that could delay a U.S. exit.

Instead, the best data and analysis have come from Washington think tanks, where two scholars in particular—Michael O'Hanlon, at the Brookings Institution, who maintains the Iraq Index (www.brookings.edu/iraq/index), and Anthony Cordesman, at the Center for Strategic and International

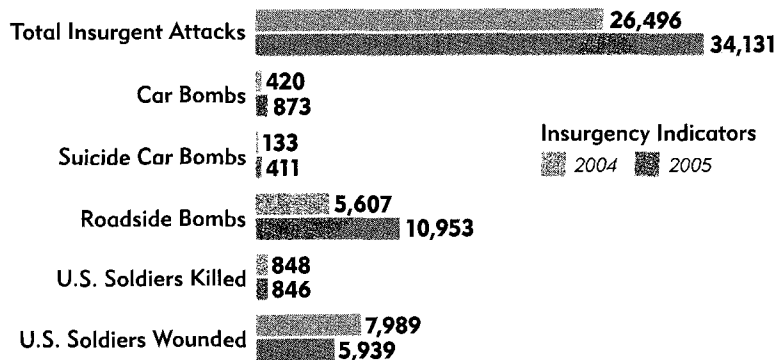
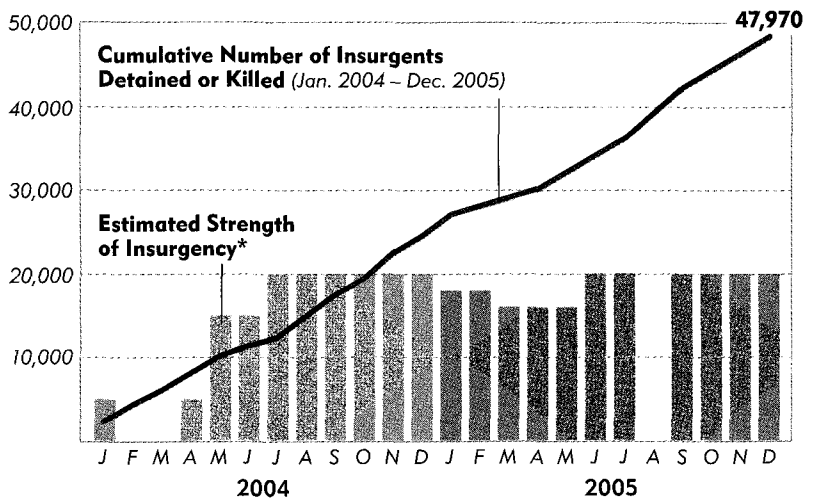
Studies, author of a series of papers on Iraq (www.csis.org)—compile painstakingly detailed reports that regularly offer the clearest outline of the insurgency's basis, growth, and development. One of the earliest indicators of trouble in Iraq was the disparity between the tenor of the statements issued by the Bush administration (including the Pentagon) about how well the war was proceeding and the numbers O'Hanlon and Cordesman were, and are, compil-

ing. Because Iraq is an issue of transcendent political importance, the lack of anything resembling incontestable statistical data on what is going well and what is going poorly has become a political issue unto itself.

For most of the war, a kind of reprise of the Vietnam body-count dispute has been taking place over the size and strength of the insurgency. In the fall of 2003, the Pentagon hosted regular briefings for think-tank experts in which it put the insurgent strength at around 5,000. Even then there were signs that officials were not being fully forthcoming. At one such meeting, a participant noted the large number of insurgents being killed or detained (information tracked monthly in O'Hanlon's Iraq Index) and asked Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld whether this showed

CUT DOWN, IT GROWS BACK AGAIN

Despite steady progress in the killing or detention of Iraqi insurgents, the size of the insurgency seems not to have diminished, as new recruits have joined



* When a range was given, the higher estimate was charted; estimates were not available for February and March 2004, and August 2005

SOURCE: IRAQ INDEX, THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

that the insurgency faced clear annihilation. "I asked him, 'Don't the numbers look pretty good?'" the participant says. "But he declined to make that claim. He was acknowledging that things weren't quite as they appeared."

O'Hanlon's and Cordesman's statistics have often served as leading indicators of how the situation in Iraq is changing. Their estimates of the insurgency's magnitude, juxtaposed with the number of fighters killed and detained, continue to indicate an opposition much larger and stronger than is being acknowledged. (Cordesman noted early on that, contrary to popular opinion in this country, the insurgency appeared to consist primarily of Iraqis and not foreign infiltrators.) Last year, for example, the Pentagon routinely estimated that there were around 20,000 insurgents under arms. The Iraq Index reported 23,500 insurgents killed or detained across 2005 alone—so had the insurgency been static, it would have been wiped out entirely sometime around early November. One can also find in these reports some of the earliest indications of how the pattern of violence has been evolving, as shown in the increase of IED bombings, the rise in assaults on oil facilities, and a shift in the targeting from U.S. troops to Iraqis.

As for the direction of things, there are indications of that, too. Cordesman's chronology of violence against the Iraqi people has tracked mosque attacks since 2003, charting an ominous pattern that became front-page news in February and that now threatens to tip Iraq into civil war.

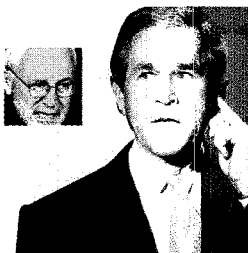
As suspicion grows that the insurgency's strength has been willfully understated, a discussion once limited to policy intellectuals has become altogether more public, and the possibility of direct political consequences much greater. The Tet Offensive in Vietnam was so devastating to Lyndon Johnson's policy because of the jarring counter it delivered to the official story line. A sharp rise in violence this year could have a similar effect on a public that has seemingly little patience left. This being an election year, the public has the means to make its frustration heard. ■

Joshua Green is a senior editor of The Atlantic.

POLL

WHO HAS BUSH'S EAR?

The Atlantic recently asked members of Congress about their perceptions of influence in the White House



Q: Right now, who is the most influential member of Bush's inner circle on matters of foreign policy? Please rank Dick Cheney, Condoleezza Rice, Karl Rove, and Donald Rumsfeld. (85 votes)

DEMOCRATS (44)

CHENEY (101 points, 15 first-place votes)

"He's number one now, but if Dick Cheney keeps shooting campaign contributors, he might drop down to number two."

"If he wasn't he'd be fired."

"The president only seems to care about foreign policy as far as it serves American interests; he's not thinking about the impact of U.S. actions within the larger global arena."

ROVE (101 points, 13 first-place votes)

"No matter who may be the domestic- and foreign-policy legs connecting to the power base in the Bush administration, Karl Rove is always at the vertex of the triangle of power."

"Rove, Rice, Rummy, and Remington [the American gun manufacturer]—in that order. I think the president would be wise to keep Cheney at a distance for a while ... self-preservation is a strategy we can all get behind."

RICE (99 points, 16 first-place votes)

"Rice has had two assets that Colin Powell lacked: a genuine bond with George Bush and the disintegration of the neo-conservatives' worldview."

"Judging from the Bush administration's extremely measured and nuanced responses to Iran's nuclear ambitions and Hamas's victory in the recent Palestinian elections, it would appear that the voice of diplomacy is edging out the usual overbearing, reactionary rhetoric."

"Condoleezza Rice, the least-obvious source of administration failures."

RUMSFELD (49 points, 0 first-place votes)

"At one point Rumsfeld was the most influential, but he is less than he used to be."

REPUBLICANS (41)

RICE (123 points, 26 first-place votes)

"It is Condi Rice, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Karl Rove—in that order. Rice is a specialist, a loyalist, and the only star in the second term. She is also the only one of the Bush team who is likely to have a post-Bush public career. She is more valuable to the president than anyone else on his team. Cheney and Rumsfeld have lost too much public credibility to trump Rice, even in private. Rove is the master of domestic politics, not foreign policy. There is no evidence he has ever tried to move beyond his sphere—and he is too smart to try now."

"Inside the president's circle I would assume Rice. [But] as far as the ability to move Congress to [the administration's] view ... she spends so little time on the Hill that she squanders a natural opportunity for major influence. In the end, Vice President Cheney has the most influence on the Hill in foreign affairs for that very same reason: he's accessible, and not only during White House initiatives."

"Cheney began as the strongest but Condi has secured her place."

"She unquestionably has the least baggage."

CHENEY (80 points, 10 first-place votes)

"But, really, who knows?"

RUMSFELD (46 points, 2 first-place votes)

"[But] nobody is currently very influential. It is a disjointed mess!"

ROVE (39 points, 1 first-place vote)

No comments.

DON'T KNOW (2 votes)

METHODOLOGY: In tallying the scores, a first-place vote was worth 4 points, a second-place vote was worth 3, a third-place vote was worth 2, and a fourth-place vote was worth 1. Not all participants ranked each of the four officials.

POLL PARTICIPANTS: The poll was sent to 111 members of the House and the Senate. A full listing of individual panelists may be found at www.theatlantic.com/doc/200605/poll.

The Benefits of Brutality

Why America's immigration outlook—current grumblings notwithstanding—remains so much healthier than Europe's

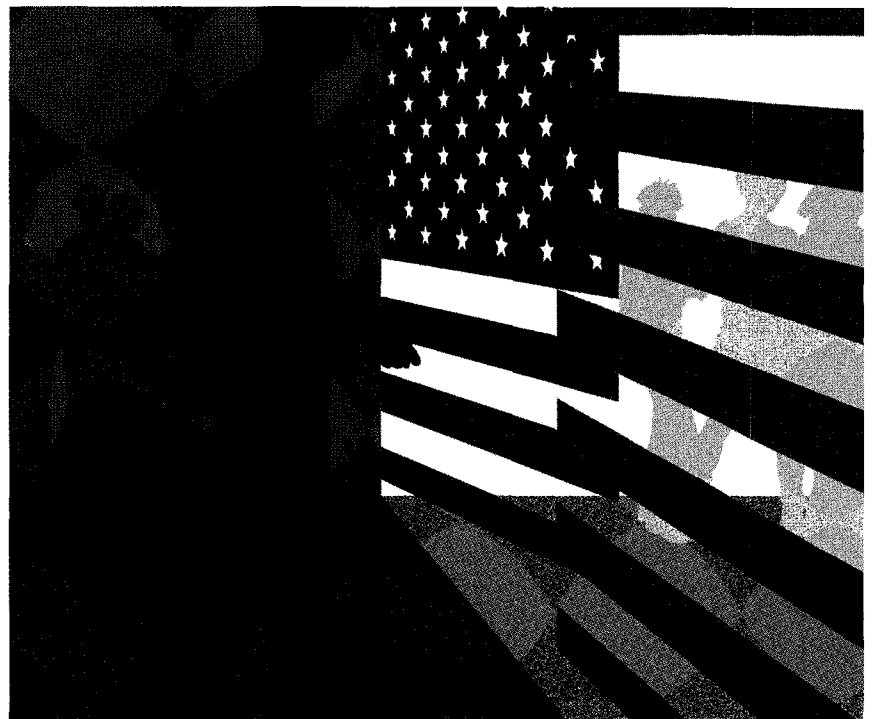
BY CLIVE CROOK

Concern over immigration comes and goes in this nation of immigrants. Currently, it is on the rise. That is surprising, and a little worrying, because alarm over the issue is normally linked to the business cycle. The economy right now is pretty strong, so one wonders where attitudes about immigration will go when that next changes, and unemployment starts increasing. There is good news, though. We know what deep hostility to immigration looks like—hostility of the sort that can lead to the crippling of economies and the slow decline of nations. It looks like Europe. American attitudes have an awfully long way to go before they reach that point, and for many reasons—some obvious, some less so—they seem unlikely to get there.

Even when it peaks, resentment of immigrants is milder here, and more guardedly expressed. A subtler but equally important difference: in America, immigration policy divides and confuses the political parties, separating liberals from liberals, and conservatives from conservatives; in Europe, by contrast, it tends to unite the political tribes behind hardened positions. Both of these differences make America a healthier place—though the underlying reasons for America's better health might be difficult for some to accept.

In all rich countries, immigration arouses three main complaints. First, immigrants lower the wages of competing domestic workers. The incumbents are likely to object to this, especially if their wages are already under pressure for other reasons (as they are everywhere, because of trade and, above all, labor-saving technology). Second, immigration can impose a fiscal burden—the costs of health care and welfare payments for immigrants, schooling for their children, and so on. So taxpayers are likely to complain too, if this

burden seems large. Third, concentrated immigration can arouse fears that the local culture will be overwhelmed. Natives press this last complaint far more vigorously, of course, if they fear (as many Europeans now do) that immigrant communities may actually harbor enemies of the host country.



On the other side, immigration finds two main sources of support. First, if the conditions are right, broad economic benefits flow in alongside the immigrants (at the low-skill end, that means cheaper food, basic manufactured goods, and services; at the high-skill end, lower prices and faster innovation as well). Second, most people are instinctively compassionate toward people willing to uproot themselves in order to improve their prospects and those of their families. Both of these ideas carry much greater force in America than in Europe. Whether one is talking about menial jobs that

Americans won't do, or the proliferating technical and scientific jobs that Americans alone can't fill, the economic case for immigration is well understood. As for the compassionate instinct to identify with immigrants, that is woven into the country's history as a central part of the collective memory.

Even so, on a narrow calculation of political interests, the contending American ideologies are pulled both ways. Conservatives are attentive to immigration's broader economic benefits—partly, one imagines, because these are disproportionately captured by shareholders, entrepreneurs, and high-wage workers (by conservative voters, in other words).

On the other hand, they are also aware of immigration's potential fiscal costs—which are disproportionately borne by the more prosperous taxpayers.

Liberals are no less conflicted. If they are more receptive than conservatives to arguments rooted in compassion for the masses huddled outside America's borders, they are also more disturbed by immigration's effects on the wages of blue-collar Americans. As for cultural anxiety, and outright prejudice for that matter, well, those doubtless influence both Right and Left. All in all, both political parties are at war with themselves over immigration, and

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that tension tends to blunt the most hostile feelings within each.

Compare this with Europe, where the economic and social contexts are both very different. Europe's economies struggle much more than America's to find work for low-skilled immigrants. High mandatory minimum wages, far-reaching "employment-protection" laws (a misnomer, since they discourage hiring), and generous welfare systems result in high unemployment among immigrants. The broader economic benefits of immigration are therefore less apparent; the bad fiscal consequences are by the same token *more* apparent; and the difficulty of assimilating immigrants and their children into mainstream society is far greater than it otherwise would be. All of this stands in contrast to the United States.

In the aggregate, these differences strengthen European opposition to immigration. Just as important, they allow that opposition to be more effectively expressed. Why? Because the European Right is much less divided on the subject than its American counterpart. Fewer economic benefits, a bigger fiscal burden, and larger anxieties about immigrants' ability to assimilate all push to align the Right behind tighter restrictions on immigration. And this was true even before fundamentalist Islam engaged voters' attention.

Looking ahead, Europe's quandary is acute. Without doubt, Europe desperately needs immigrants and their children—immigrants who go to work, that is. Its population is growing far more slowly than America's (even falling, in some countries), and is aging fast. A few decades from now, the costs of its generous state pensions will be insupportable unless these demographic trends change. Yet just as these problems are beginning to manifest, European opposition to immigrants, especially Muslims, is growing.

On the face of it, America's welfare system is harsher and less hospitable than Europe's, something that many liberals lament. But in this respect, at least, that appearance is misleading. The unintended consequences of Europe's milder regime are not just a looming fiscal collapse but also, in the meantime,

intensifying and plainly self-destructive anti-immigrant sentiment. America's harsher insistence on work is not just economically advantageous (which is self-evident) but socially beneficial as well (which some may find surprising). Jobs alone are not enough to ensure successful assimilation of immigrants, but jobs are a necessary condition. By insisting that immigrants work, the host country attacks the incumbents' intellectual and emotional resistance to immigration. The work requirement increases the dis-

and most likely fluent in English, they assimilate readily. (Speaking personally, this writer would also be grateful if getting his visa renewed could be a bit less of an ordeal next time.)

It is the American way—so what is the problem? The only drawback to this kind of liberalization, from a global point of view, is that it seems perverse to draw skilled workers from backward countries such as my native United Kingdom, where they are so badly needed, and bring them to the

In America, immigration policy divides and confuses the political parties. This makes America healthier—though the underlying reasons might be hard for some to accept.

persed economic benefits; it reduces or eliminates the net fiscal burden; and it lowers cultural barriers. As a result, tempers cool. In these key respects, America's more brutal model is kinder—in addition to being more sustainable.

That's not to say the American model isn't under stress. One thing the current version of that model cannot do is answer concerns about competition for low-wage jobs and widening inequality of incomes. Indeed, insisting that low-skilled immigrants work, and affording them the opportunity to do so, only makes that problem worse. And the vast majority of immigrants to the U.S. today are low-skilled.

There is, however, a partial, and theoretically simple, remedy: Congress and the administration should heed the demands of many American businesses and lift restrictions on the immigration of highly skilled workers. For the country at large, this would yield nothing but benefits. America is short of many kinds of skilled workers, which is why wages for such people are rising faster than average wages. Increasing the supply from abroad would slow, and conceivably even reverse, the trend of worsening inequality. Highly skilled workers, of course, pay more in taxes than they consume in public services: far from adding to the fiscal burden, they ease it, and everybody else benefits. And since they are well educated

United States, which already has so many. And that argument probably applies with even greater force to educated immigrants from, say, Mexico or Nigeria. One answer to this concern is that immigrants send money back home. (Yes, in case you are wondering.) According to most studies, countries such as Mexico and India, which receive huge flows of remittances, are probably net fiscal beneficiaries from outward migration. That is fine, but there is a much better answer: namely, that no country has the right to keep its citizens locked in, or should expect America's help in doing that—not even if it would add to the gross domestic product. If America's interests are served by letting many more highly skilled immigrants come to this country, and if those immigrants calculate that migrating is in their interests as well, that is all you need to know.

The muddled politics of immigration make that reform, or any other, difficult, which is a pity. But even as the specific pattern of American immigration continues to exacerbate inequality, the tangle remains mostly a good thing. Europe's greater clarity on the issue springs from a much bigger failure, and nurtures a grave and worsening predicament. Sadly, its unmuddled politicians are staring intently away from the solution. ▀

Clive Crook is a senior editor of The Atlantic.

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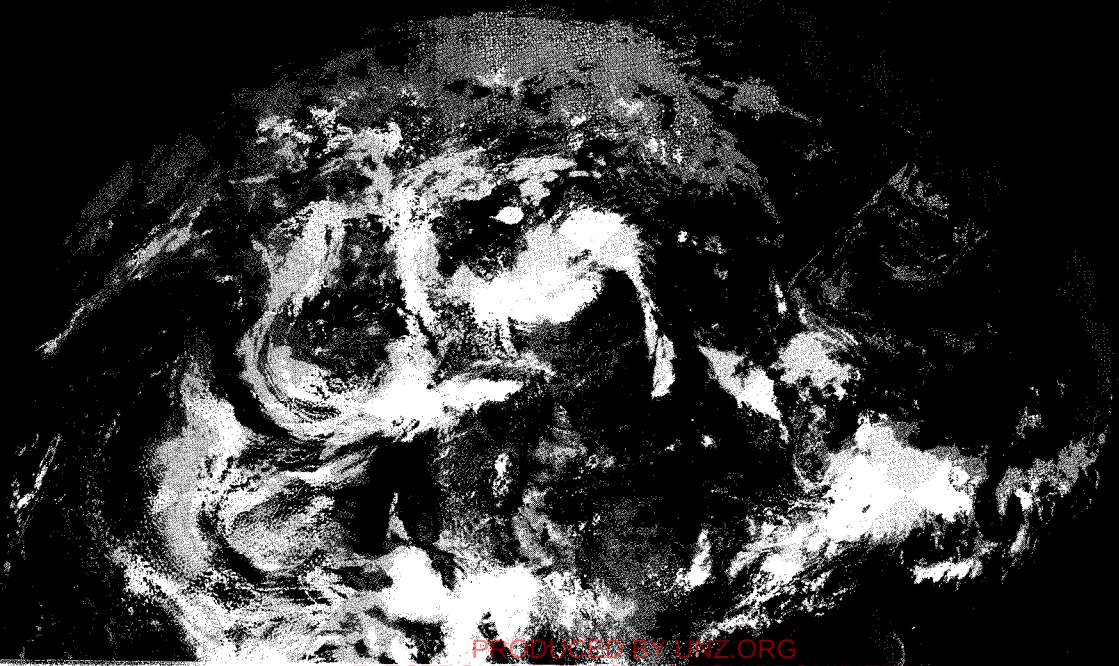
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The Man With the Golden Phone

Before Mark Warner was a politician, he was a wildly successful entrepreneur—and his success as a huckster shows why he may be a formidable challenger for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination

BY PAUL STAROBIN

“Behind every great fortune there is a crime,” wrote Mario Puzo, paraphrasing the French novelist Honoré de Balzac, in the epigraph to *The Godfather*. Mark Warner, the Democratic former governor of Virginia who is now eyeing a run at the presidency, is no criminal—but he did make his first big money by exploiting a multibillion-dollar government giveaway in the cell-phone industry. At campaign events and other speaking engagements, he often tries a disarming joke about the source of his wealth. When a cell phone rings in the audience, he will invariably pause. “Those cell phones,” he likes to say. “Most people consider them an annoyance, but I just hear ‘cha-ching, cha-ching.’”

While Warner is not yet registering strongly in most polls, his star is in its ascendancy among political insiders. Many appraisers of political horseflesh believe that he may have qualities—not possessed by the putative front-runner Hillary Rodham Clinton—that could retrieve the White House for the Democrats in 2008.

Warner’s success as a blue governor of a red state—he departed the governor’s office, in mid-January, with an 80 percent public-approval rating—explains some of the current enthusiasm. But his earlier business accomplishments are an essential part of his story, and are perhaps the clearest window into his abilities, his character, and his political future. Ultimately, it’s the skills he showed as a pioneer in the arcane practice of flipping cellular-phone licenses that might also make him a success in presidential politics.

Warner, who was born in 1954 in Indianapolis, is not from a wealthy background. He attended public schools and was the first in his family to finish college. As a boy, he says, he was always

interested in politics. And indeed his early adulthood follows an arc that is consistent with political ambition: George Washington University, followed by Harvard Law School, followed by an \$18,000-a-year job raising funds for the Democratic National Committee.

But Warner began his career in 1980—either “Morning in America” or the onset of a decade of greed, depending on one’s perspective—and his thoughts soon turned to moneymaking. *Wall Street* may have been the iconic movie of the eighties, but in an era of deregulation and privatization, Washington offered its own brand of opportunity for the canny and the connected. The Federal Communications Commission—rule-maker for the broadcasting and cable industries, and for the then-nascent cell-phone business—was especially generous in the fortunes it bestowed.

In the mid-1980s, the FCC abandoned its cumbersome and costly license application process and began awarding licenses—which entitled the bearer to operate cellular franchises in specific markets—by lottery. Just about anyone could enter, and the winners received their licenses for free. Like most lotteries, this one attracted a lot of players (some of whom were individuals, and some partnership groups).

Warner—whose eyes had been opened to the growth possibilities of the cellular market by a DNC donor he knew—did not enter the lottery. But he did spot a way to profit from this federal largesse.

Most of the lottery winners had no intention of using their licenses; they hoped to sell them. To whom and at what price? That was murky—the market for cell phones was still in its infancy, and information was scarce. Warner, among a half-dozen or so other operators, stepped into this

breach and brought some degree of order to the chaos. He furiously brokered deals between buyers and sellers (in return for 5 percent of the sale price). And in a risky gamble, he used borrowed money to buy shares in the licenses held by partnership groups (later reselling—flipping—these shares at much higher prices). Eventually, after making a name for himself, he signed on to Columbia Capital, a venture-capital partnership focused on the wireless industry. In ten years, he made \$150 million.

When Warner began this endeavor, he had no expertise and no money of his own. (He’d blown his life savings—\$5,000—on a failed energy start-up in the early eighties.) James Murray, a Charlottesville, Virginia-based venture capitalist who was a partner with Warner in Columbia Capital, tells the story of one of Warner’s first forays into cellular-license brokerage in his book, *Wireless Nation: The Frenzied Launch of the Cellular Revolution in America*. In 1986, a meeting was held in the ballroom of the Westin Hotel in Washington, D.C. In attendance were nearly a hundred members of a partnership that had won collective rights to ten cellular markets. The question was how the partners—individually, or as a group—were going to dispose of their market rights. Warner was not known to the investors, but, based on the knowledge he’d acquired through careful study of the cell-phone market, he persuaded their lawyers to let him speak at the meeting.

When it was Warner’s turn to talk, he stood in front of the gathering and “in his booming baritone” pleaded for the partners to stick together and hire a single agent—himself—to find the highest-price buyers for the licenses. If they failed to unify, he warned, “some of you are going to get a whole bunch of money, and the rest of you are going to get screwed.” Even though Warner “looked young enough to be a student,” Murray wrote, he generated “an excited buzz” with his presentation, like that at a revival meeting. When Warner wrapped up the pitch, the room fell silent. And then one partner spoke up: “Goddammit, Mark, I think we should do it with you.” All of them did.



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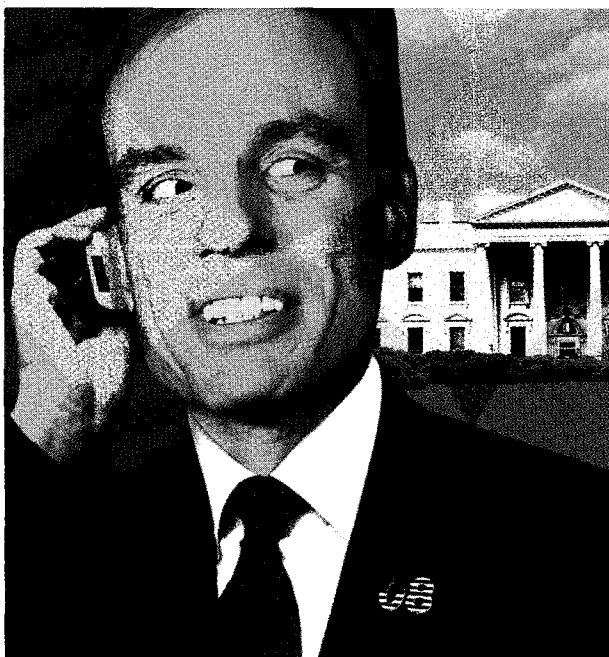
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As a deal-closer, Warner was masterful. He could walk cold into a room strained by a quarrelsome negotiation and lock up a bargain. He has the long reach of a man who stands six feet three inches tall, and he once used that wingspan to advantage by grabbing the wrists of a pair of verbal combatants and forcing them to shake hands across a wide table. Nigel Morris, a founder of Capital One Financial Corporation and a good friend and adviser of Warner's, told me, "You sense him physically. He's there, he puts his arm around you, there's one shake, then a second hand ... He has great instincts to know when to push and how hard to push."



Murray, in a recent interview, put it in slightly different terms: "Mark has a way of being almost offensive in insisting on what people ought to do," he told me. "He can intimidate, badger, cajole, whine—do whatever is necessary to get the buyer to buy and the seller to sell."

In late December, three weeks before he was due to leave office, I met Warner at the governor's quarters in Richmond. On his desk was a present he had received for his fifty-first birthday, five days earlier: a wristwatch with "Warner, 2008" inscribed on the face.

Warner can seem wooden in his public appearances—"I'm not a naturally

gifted speaker," he acknowledged to me—his success at hypnotizing the Westin ballroom partnership group notwithstanding. But one-on-one, he's personable and loose, quite good at putting a visitor at ease. It's easy to picture Warner comfortably relating to folks from all walks of life. In Richmond, he plays basketball with delegates—he's known for his sharp elbows—and sometimes drinks beer with them as well. Diffidence is a crippling quality for both salespeople and politicians; Warner seems to have none.

Warner told me that his "value-added" in the political arena is his hands-on experience on the frontiers of the "New Economy." He said he has seen firsthand the importance of innovation and entrepreneurialism, and believes staunchly that both of them must be nurtured and promoted by government.

Although this sounds a bit like a campaign commercial—or text from a corporate brochure—flagging his business experience is one way for Warner to separate himself from the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. Indeed, as a successful entrepreneur, a fiscal conservative, and a social-issues libertarian (he's pro-choice on abortion), Warner would seem to fit fairly comfortably into the moderate wing of today's Republican Party. Many of his friends in the high-tech community—some of

whom donated more than \$100,000 to back his gubernatorial campaign—are either political independents or outright Republicans.

But Warner told me that he has long seen the Democratic Party as the one more committed to expanding the economic pie and ensuring that everyone gets a slice. When he was at Columbia Capital, his politically less-committed partners teased him about insisting on hiring at least one support staffer on affirmative-action grounds. His rhetoric revolves around "Third Way" ideas to give everyone—through first-rate, equal-opportunity education—a fair chance to participate in our evolving information-based economy.

In Virginia, which has not gone for a Democratic presidential candidate since 1964, Warner governed as a pragmatic, results-oriented centrist. Notably, he persuaded a Republican-dominated legislature to pass a landmark fiscal package that raised the sales-tax rate and boosted spending for public schools and law enforcement. "Politics is the only business I know of where doing nothing other than making the other guys look bad is an acceptable outcome," Warner says. "That would never pass for success in the business world."

As for Warner's presidential aspirations, many of the abilities that he displayed as an entrepreneur translate directly to the building of a successful campaign: he is accomplished at networking, fund-raising, lining up backers—anything that gives him a chance to bend an arm or two. (Former DNC Chairman Don Fowler, a Warner enthusiast, says that the prospective candidate is now doing "what he has been doing [for] a long time—raising venture capital," only in this instance, "he is the product.") His pragmatism and deal-closing abilities can only help him as he seeks the support of the Democratic Party's notoriously heterodox interest group leaders. What's more, Warner has had time to hone his message and widen the appeal of his "brand"—as adviser Nigel Morris calls it—before entering the national spotlight, an advantage that the well-defined and politically polarizing Hillary Clinton conspicuously lacks.

Whether Warner can sell himself to the American voter—which is in no small part a matter of selling his life story—is a different question. Warner's cellular-license-flipping exploits undoubtedly will draw some pointed questions from the national press corps. But then, too, Hillary Clinton will probably have to explain, once again, how she managed, long ago, to pocket a tidy sum by trading cattle-futures contracts. Americans, in any case, seldom resent a politician's wealth. Back in 1976, they elected a millionaire peanut farmer, Jimmy Carter, who was also, like Warner, a one-term governor of a southern state. Behind every great fortune, Americans tend to believe, is the story of a winner. ▀

Paul Starobin is a contributing editor of The Atlantic.

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Marital Differences

The national divide over gay marriage is a recipe for legal confusion—but we should learn to live with it

BY BENJAMIN WITTES

Will this year's midterm elections feature a new raft of state ballot initiatives to ban same-sex marriage?

Definitely. Voters in eighteen states have already passed such bans, and the ballot initiatives have proven to be a major base-mobilizer for conservatives—so this year, there will be more. At least six states—Alabama, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin—will certainly hold referenda, and Arizona and Colorado are likely to do so as well. And given the success such measures have enjoyed at the ballot box, they will probably pass with strong majorities.

Yet these referenda—and the ongoing backlash they represent against the 2003 decision by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court to legalize same-sex marriage—do not constitute the most interesting development in the emerging politics of gay marriage.

What development would that be?

A quiet countercurrent, driven by popular opinion, that's making progress in several states, even in the face of the post-Massachusetts backlash.

Popular opinion? Isn't gay marriage just the handiwork of "activist judges"?

Conservatives, including President Bush, often deride it as such. But the last few years have seen significant movement toward state recognition of same-sex relationships through normal democratic processes. In 2004, legislators in New Jersey and Maine passed domestic-partnership laws, joining Hawaii in formally recognizing same-sex partnerships and granting them certain rights associated with marriage. Last year, Connecticut's legislature instituted civil unions (the bill was signed into law by a Republican governor); with Vermont, it's one of only two states to have established this legal alter ego

for heterosexual marriage. Even before the Massachusetts court ruled, California lawmakers had moved to beef up their own domestic-partnership law to grant nearly all the entitlements of a marriage license; then, last September, they passed a bill creating actual gay marriage—which Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed. Also last year, Maryland lawmakers passed a bill creating a formal statewide registry of "life partners" to facilitate medical decision-making. Republican Governor Robert Ehrlich vetoed it but took enough political heat for doing so that he came back in the following legislative session with a watered-down proposal of his own.

Then there's Massachusetts itself. After the state high court's ruling, the backlash seemed all but certain to provoke a state constitutional amendment to either outlaw gay marriage entirely or institute a "civil unions yes, marriage no" compromise. But then gay couples began marrying, the world didn't end, and the political momentum shifted. In September 2005, the legislature decisively rejected an initiative that would have put a constitutional amendment on the ballot. Using a different procedure, gay-marriage foes may get one on anyway in 2008, but they may not—and even if they do, they may not win. The democratic politics of Massachusetts are proving far less hostile to gay marriage than the initial reaction to the court decision suggested.

It's perhaps too early to call it a trend, but these signs of movement toward gay marriage suggest a more complicated dynamic than a simple confrontation between liberal judges and more traditional, conservative voters. Through a combination of litigation and legislation, we may well see marriage law liberalize dramatically in the bluest of the blue states, even as their red and purple counterparts move to

constitutionally establish marriage as exclusively heterosexual. The result will be a dramatic divide in the legal structures that govern marriage—a gulf that will challenge federalism as few issues have in recent American history.

Which states seem likely to recognize gay marriage?

Currently, advocates are pursuing litigation in Washington—where a state Supreme Court decision could come down any time—and in California, Connecticut, Iowa, Maryland, New Jersey, and New York. In some of these states, gay-marriage proponents are simultaneously pursuing legislative change. We can also expect further pushes for reform in states like Maine, Hawaii, and Vermont. The interactions between the legislative efforts and the litigation are complicated—the threat of successful litigation can spur legislatures to reform marriage law themselves, but successful litigation can also trigger a backlash. So the likelihood of change varies from state to state, as does the specific mechanism. But I think it is reasonable to expect that ten years from now—perhaps much sooner—most of these states will have either formalized same-sex marriage or established institutions very much like it.

What will happen then?

It's hard to know, but the conflicts between state laws will present real difficulties. American federalism is enormously flexible, and varied state approaches to a social issue are unremarkable: Nevada law permits gambling and some prostitution, Oregon allows doctor-assisted suicide, and a number of states permit medical uses of marijuana—in spite of the federal law against it. But same-sex marriage is different. Whereas casinos don't move between states, and Mississippi has no stake when an Oregonian kills himself, marriage is traditionally portable. Couples married in one state move to another, where they get divorced and fight over kids. They get sick. They die. All of these acts involve one state recognizing the marriage laws of another—yet most states not only don't license gay marriages themselves, they don't recognize the validity of out-of-state licenses either.

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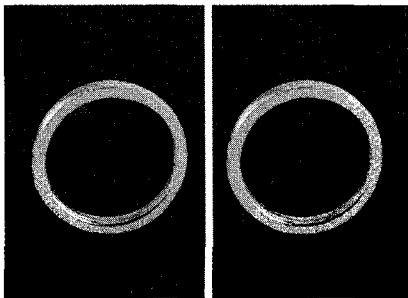
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We are already seeing states wrestling with the conflicts in marriage law. For example, a trial court in Virginia—where state law declares any gay partnership “void”—has refused to enforce a custody order stemming from the dissolution of a Vermont civil union. Which state’s laws control such a fight? A great deal of American law depends on the willingness of each state to recognize and enforce the official acts of the others. An unwillingness to do so in an arena as fundamental as marriage will produce a lot of confusion and more than a little hardship—at least until we establish clearer rules of the road.



Can’t the federal government provide any guidance?

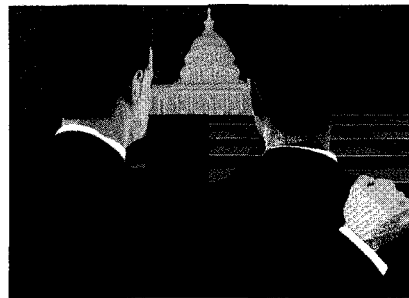
For the foreseeable future, the only reasonable federal approach is to embrace a certain measure of disorder. A federal law, the Defense of Marriage Act, placed the federal government in a position of virtual neutrality. DOMA does not prohibit states from licensing gay marriages. But it denies such unions federal recognition, and it permits any other state to refuse to recognize them as well. I can imagine the federal government moving toward a more liberal policy in terms of its own recognition of gay marriages, but I can’t see federal policy either forbidding the unions themselves or requiring unwilling states to recognize them.

Why not? Isn’t it the job of federal law to force states into harmony on a matter this fundamental?

No. Any aggressive attempt to impose a single principle on states headed in such different directions would be intolerably coercive. Advocates of a federal constitutional amendment to define marriage as an exclusively heterosexual affair, for example, pretend to be fight-

ing activist judges. But the amendment wouldn’t just override the Massachusetts court decision—it would void the democratic decision of a state that adopted gay marriage legislatively. Why should these states not be permitted to go their own way if their voters so choose?

On the other hand, if the many ballot initiatives around the country prove anything, it’s that voters in many states—and not just in deeply conservative ones—are profoundly unready to accept gay marriage. To force them to recognize same-sex unions would effectively allow a small group of liberal states to set social policy for the rest of the nation. Respect



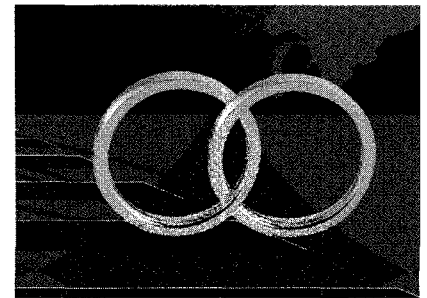
for the democratic choices of divergent political cultures counsels patience.

But isn’t this a matter of basic civil rights? Why should people be patient?

It is and it isn’t. For those who support same-sex marriage—and I support it without reservation—the ideal of equality and the belief in the dignity of same-sex relationships necessarily makes the issue seem a great deal like the civil-rights struggles of the past. But the civil-rights movement was asking America to honor a set of principles it had already adopted into law—indeed, into the Constitution itself—a century earlier, after a bloody civil war fought precisely over the status of African-Americans. By contrast, America has never legally embraced the right of gays and lesbians to marry. So no matter how compelling, or seductive, the language of civil rights may be, gay-marriage advocates must remember that they are not asking for the recognition of an existing right, but the creation of a new one—which will require, for many people, a significant rethinking of a deeply established social institution.

This was the basic error of the abortion-rights movement, which “won”

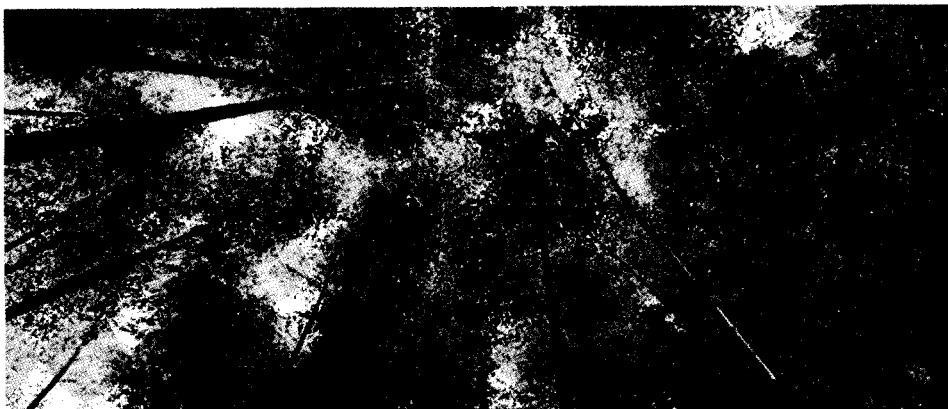
with *Roe v. Wade* without ever doing the political legwork to persuade legislatures to relax their abortion laws. As a result, the right to an abortion is perpetually threatened by the permanent anti-abortion constituency it mobilized, and it is protected only by the continued solicitude of judges. (See “Letting Go of *Roe*,” January/February 2005 *Atlantic*.) A more patient and democratic approach to social change carries risks—specifically, the risk of winning in a few states and then seeing progress stall and the divide harden. But I find this possibility implausible, because large numbers of same-sex



marriages in some of the nation’s largest states cannot but affect the larger culture. Already, poll data suggests that younger people have a far more inclusive vision of marriage than their elders. The patient, slow, legislative route may be less emotionally satisfying than the big judicial win, but it will pay far greater dividends in the long run.

It is also less dangerous. Advocates of gay marriage have made impressive gains so far, but that progress remains fragile. Last year Maryland’s legislature passed a bill giving same-sex couples medical decision-making rights; this year the state fought an intense battle over whether to allow a ballot initiative banning same-sex marriage. The reason for the shift in the terms of the debate? A state trial court had ruled that gays *must* be allowed to marry. There’s a lesson here about the delicate politics of gay marriage in America: many people may be willing to contemplate greater acceptance of gay relationships than current polls would suggest, but they will not tolerate having their hands forced. ▀

Benjamin Wittes is an editorial writer at The Washington Post.



The value of seeing the whole forest.

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The Web Police

Internet censorship is prevalent not just in China but throughout the world. Can the Web be tamed?

China has become notorious for the extent and sophistication of its Internet censorship. The government constantly adjusts its roster of banned Web sites. Search engines filter content, leaving only pro-government information on sensitive topics. Companies that provide space to bloggers censor hundreds of key words, such as "democracy," "Falun Gong," and "freedom." Chat rooms are monitored by tens of thousands of government workers, who remove offending posts. E-mail is subject to censorship, although less likely to be blocked than public communications. Even text messages are now perused by the authorities.

But China is hardly alone in its vigilance. The map at right, based on research by Reporters Without Borders, a free-press watchdog group, shows the state of Internet freedom in fifty-five countries worldwide, based on how much of the Web is blocked and how vulnerable citizens are to government intimidation for unsanctioned use.

For the most part, the countries that police the Web most thoroughly are the ones you'd expect: Iran, China, and Vietnam are among the most aggressive, blocking a wide range of political, religious, human-rights, and vice-related sites while tracking Internet users carefully. In Burma and Cuba, only a tiny fraction of users can connect to the Internet at all; the rest can access only their country's intranet, composed mostly of business and government propaganda sites. Several states filter only minimally but make examples of those who speak up on the Web: there are currently fifty-five dissidents imprisoned for online activities worldwide—forty-eight in China, two in Vietnam, two in Iran, and one each in the Maldives, Tunisia, and Syria.

But liberal democracies also filter the Web. Google first censored its search engine on a state's behalf not in January to assist China but nearly four years ago to comply with hate-speech codes

INTERNET FREEDOM

The map to the right is based on the work of Reporters Without Borders, a free-press advocacy group that ranked fifty-five countries in a 2004 survey based on levels of Web censorship, intimidation, and the existence of independent online media.



in Germany, France, and Switzerland. In America, Pennsylvania's then-attorney general enforced a law requiring Internet service providers to block sites hosting child porn, though the courts have since deemed that law unconstitutional.

Worldwide, the number one target of government filters is not political speech but pornography. In Islamic states, sites featuring lingerie, alcohol, drugs, gay or lesbian images, evangelism, sex education, and criticism of Islam are often blocked. This emphasis on moral matters may reflect the hierarchy of concerns of many governments, but sites catering to vice are also the easiest to block: many government censors rely on off-the-shelf filtering software—originally built to keep employees from engaging in dubious workplace activities—which features ready-made blacklists of offensive sites by category. (This sort of filtering can be clumsy, and inevitably leads to inadvertent blocking. For instance, smut filters have blocked the tourism site of the English county of Essex and temporarily stopped the residents of Scunthorpe from logging on to AOL.)

While China has proved that the mass of casual surfers can be effectively blinkered by a committed regime, experienced users can find ways through the firewall. Only the most dedicated governments can keep blacklists up to date on the ever-changing Web, and very often simply trying an alternate address or dropping the prefix "www" will allow access to a banned site. Bloggers can also slip obvious misspellings of banned words past the censors. In Cuba, a black market in Internet access has sprung up.

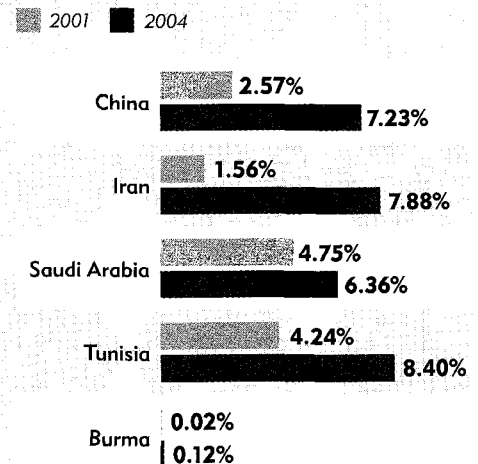
COLLABORATORS

U.S. companies provide most of the technology for foreign censors. Secure Computing's SmartFilter has been used by Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Iran. To comply with China's laws, Google has created a censored search engine, Microsoft has taken down offending blogs, and Yahoo has shared information that landed a Chinese journalist in jail.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF CENSORSHIP

The OpenNet Initiative has gone inside some of the world's most repressive regimes to see what different states are most afraid of on the Web. The bar graph below shows the percentage of residents in selected countries who have any Internet access at all. The circles on the facing page indicate the percentage of sites blocked by category in those countries in 2004 and 2005. Very small percentages may represent inadvertent blocking.

PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION USING THE INTERNET



New software and Web services increasingly allow Internet users to bypass filters. Dissident exiles and groups like the OpenNet Initiative and Electronic Frontier Foundation actively update and distribute such software in a race to stay ahead of the censors, although the censors are fighting back by blocking access to those resources, and even allegedly attacking those

FREE (FOR NOW)

Vladimir Putin's media crackdown in Russia has largely missed the Web, which is teeming with opposition (although the state has hired hackers, and at least one anti-Putin site has been hacked and replaced with government propaganda). Whether or not to block dissent on the Internet remains a contentious debate in the Kremlin.

THE GREAT FIREWALL

China has built the world's most advanced filtering regime. It can block not just whole domains (like www.amnesty.org) but individual pages within a site (yale.edu is available, but its pages on the Falun Gong are blocked), making its censorship seem less oppressive. Sophisticated technology allows China to automatically search and instantly block new Web content containing politically sensitive key words—the maintenance of "blacklists" is not required.

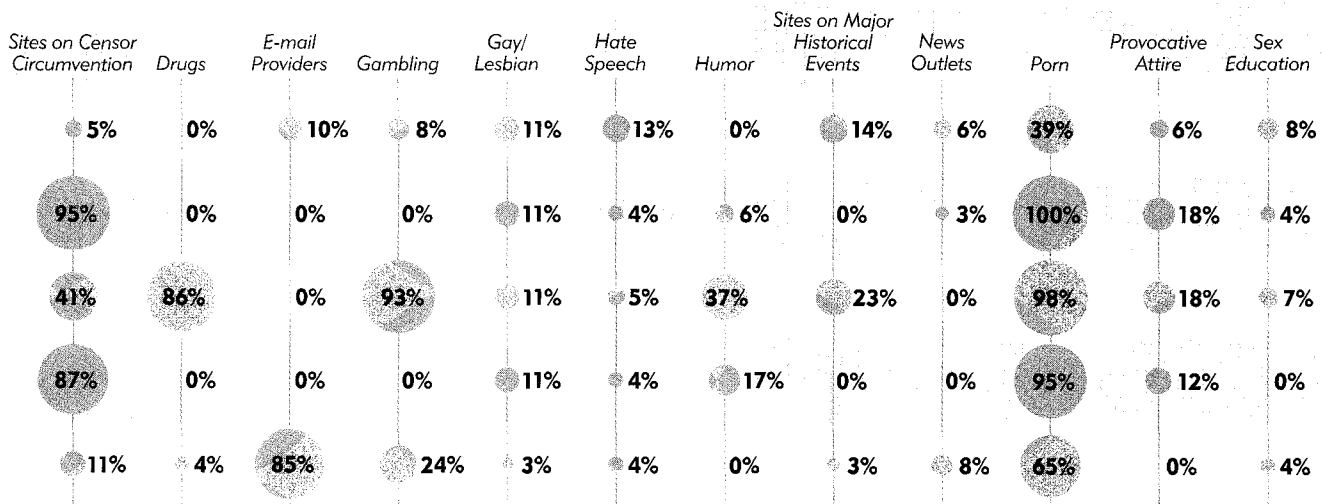
MISSION CREEP

Once begun, filtering sometimes expands beyond its original purposes. In Thailand, for instance, filtering systems established legally to stop certain vice-related online activities were then used secretly to block muckraking and political opposition sites.

POPULAR POLICING

Saudi Arabia blocks most drug, sex, and gambling sites—but gay and lesbian, political, news, and alcohol sites are largely accessible, and the Saudi government is open about its filtering activities. In a 1999 survey, while 45 percent of Saudis thought too many sites were blocked, 41 percent thought the level was reasonable and 14 percent wanted more censorship.

PERCENTAGE OF WEB SITES IN EACH CATEGORY THAT WERE BLOCKED



writing the codes (a Falun Gong specialist in circumventing Chinese filters was rolled in a carpet and beaten, and the computers taken from his Atlanta home, in February).

Like so much early hype surrounding the Internet, talk of the Web's potential as a democratizing force has far exceeded the reality. To date, relatively well-wired countries such as the United

Arab Emirates, Singapore, and China have reaped many of the economic benefits of the Web while still stifling the flow of free information. Censorship techniques in these places have become more precise and supple over time.

But it's still too soon to know whether censors will be able to keep the Web under heel. Most governments are not sophisticated in their attempts at

censorship—they rely on simple filtering technologies that can be defeated by a determined political opposition. Even in China, information is seeping through. The regime is having trouble staying on top of the 111 million residents now online—less than 10 percent of the country's population. It's hard to imagine how it will keep up as that number swells. —MATTHEW QUIRK

Primary Sources

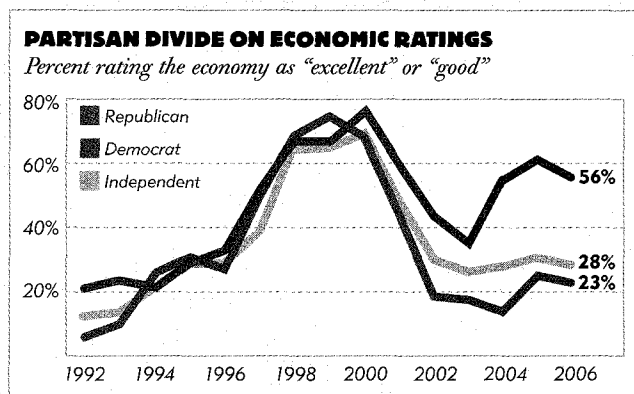
Diagnosis at a distance; why private school might not be worth it; Pretty Boy Floyd as statistical outlier; the upside of global warming

INTELLIGENCE

Paging Dr. Bond

When Bill Frist tried to diagnose Terri Schiavo via videotape last year, he was taking a page from the intelligence world's playbook, a recently declassified 1979 CIA report reveals. The report examines the use of "medical intelligence" in diagnosing the illnesses of foreign leaders without the benefit of a direct examination, a process

labeled "remote medical diagnosis." Such diagnoses are facilitated by face-to-face encounters, but they can also be carried out using photographs, videotape, and even voice analysis (to identify stroke victims). The most useful images, the authors note, are those "obtained in more informal settings, particularly such sporting occasions as golf, hunting, and swimming when attire and postures are



ECONOMY

Red-State-Colored Glasses

In yet another sign of political polarization, Democrats and Republicans can't even agree on how well the economy is doing. Throughout the 1990s, there was little partisan disagreement on the topic: even during politically fraught periods like the Republican Revolution of 1994 and the impeachment of Bill Clinton, voters on both sides of the political divide held roughly similar views about the health of the American economy. Since George W. Bush's election in 2000, though, Democrats' and Republicans' perceptions of economic matters have steadily diverged, to the point where in a recent Pew poll, 56 percent of Republican respondents rated the state of the economy as either "excellent" or "good," whereas only 28 percent of independents and 23 percent of Democrats judged that it was doing well. This divide holds true regardless of income: poor, middle-class, and well-off GOP voters were all far more likely than their Democratic and independent counterparts to say that the economy was in "excellent" or "good" shape.

—"Economy Now Seen Through Partisan Prism," Pew Research Center for the People and the Press

more revealing of the subject's physical condition." As an example of a successful remote diagnosis, they cite the case of Leonid Brezhnev: in 1973, an "astute personal observation by a medical analyst" correctly diagnosed the Soviet leader with cardiac arrhythmia (he had a pacemaker installed shortly afterward) and with teeth so rotten that his face drooped and his words slurred. The latter diagnosis, the authors note, enabled the CIA to dismiss later theories that he had cancer of the mouth or had suffered a stroke. They also discuss the successful diagnosis of French President Georges Pompidou, whom CIA analysts observed in the early seventies developing a "characteristically puffy face" possibly indicative of cortisone treatments for multiple myeloma. This analysis was vindicated when Pompidou died from the disease, which he had hidden from the public. However, it's possible to keep a foreign leader's ailments secret even from the CIA: when Golda Meir passed away in 1978, aides revealed that she had been suffering from malignant lymphoma for over a decade—and the authors admit that they "had been entirely unaware that she had this lethal disease."

—"Remote Medical Diagnosis," M. Maxfield, R. Proper, and S. Case, Central Intelligence Agency

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

They Like Us— They Really Like Us!

Not every post-9/11 military intervention has cost us the hearts and minds of the local population, according to a new poll sponsored by the Program on International Policy Attitudes. The poll, based

on a random nationwide sample of Afghan adults and carried out late last year, finds that 83 percent of Afghans have either a "very favorable" or "somewhat favorable" impression of the U.S. military forces in Afghanistan, and 70 percent rate the security situation in their region as either "excellent" or "good," while only 5 percent call it "poor." Eighty-three percent of respondents said their country was moving in the "right direction," a similar percentage told pollsters that the toppling of the Taliban was a "good thing" for their country, and 79 percent approved of American military operations against al-Qaeda.

—"WorldPublicOpinion.Org Poll of Afghanistan," Program on International Policy Attitudes

EDUCATION

Going Public

Students at private schools tend to outscore their public-school counterparts on standardized tests—but are private schools really better at educating their students, or do they just enroll more pupils from socioeconomic backgrounds that foster academic achievement? A new study takes up this question by examining math scores from the 2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress, which tested more than 28,000 fourth and eighth graders nationwide. As expected, private-school students earned substantially higher math scores on the NAEP tests than did students in public schools—but when the authors controlled for socioeconomic status, the private-school advantage completely disappeared. Indeed, when the authors compared students within socioeconomic brackets, rather than

across them, the students from public schools actually outscored their private-school peers, in the fourth and eighth grades alike.

—“A New Look at Public and Private Schools: Student Background and Mathematics Achievement,” Sarah Theule Lubienski and Christopher Lubienski, *Phi Delta Kappan*

SOCIETY

Looks Make the Thug

Dick Tracy had it right, a new study suggests: there really is a correlation between ugliness and crime. A pair of economists examined looks and lawbreaking among adults aged eighteen to twenty-six, using a longitudinal study involving interviews with more than 15,000 adolescents and young adults. Controlling for socioeconomic status, the economists found that as a person's reported attractiveness decreases, the chance of his or her having committed a crime—from selling drugs to burglary—goes up. (Interviewers were asked to rate the attractiveness of each participant on a 1-to-5 scale.) The authors note that their findings may be partially explained by the fact that good-looking people tend to have higher earnings than the unattractive, who therefore have a stronger financial incentive to consider a life of crime. But other factors may be at work: the effect of unattractiveness on crime is particularly strong among women, and the study suggests that this may have to do with “human-capital formation” in high school, where good-looking females tend to have higher GPAs and fewer disciplinary problems than unattractive girls, making them less prone to crime later on in life. The authors also note that attractive women “tend to receive favorable

TRANSPORTATION

In Search of Lost Time

Every commuter has a least-favorite bottleneck, but if you live in Los Angeles you may have quite a few of them, according to a study prepared for the Federal Highway Administration which lists the twenty-four worst bottlenecks in the United States. Five are in Los Angeles, including the worst of all: the intersection of U.S. 101 and I-405, which generates 27,144 hours of delay every year. The worst bottlenecks on the East Coast, meanwhile, are in Atlanta, and just off the dreaded Capital Beltway around Washington, D.C.

WORST TRAFFIC BOTTLENECKS IN THE UNITED STATES 2002

	Annual Hours of Delay (Hours in Thousands)
1. U.S. 101 at I-405 Interchange (Los Angeles)	27,144
2. I-610 at I-10 Interchange (Houston)	25,181
3. I-90/94 at I-290 Interchange (Chicago)	25,068
4. I-10 at SR 51/SR 202 Interchange (Phoenix)	22,805
5. I-405 at I-10 Interchange (Los Angeles)	22,792
6. I-75 south of the I-85 Interchange (Atlanta)	21,045
7. I-495 at I-270 Interchange (DC-Maryland-Virginia)	19,429
8. I-10 at I-5 Interchange (Los Angeles)	18,606
9. I-405 at I-605 Interchange (Los Angeles)	18,606
10. I-285 at I-85 Interchange (Atlanta)	17,072

—“An Initial Assessment of Freight Bottlenecks on Highways,” Cambridge Systematics Inc.

treatment from the criminal-justice system”—that is, even when they break the law, they are less likely to be detained for it.

—“Ugly Criminals,” Naci Mocan and Erdal Tekin, National Bureau of Economic Research

BUSINESS

Pitch Me a Pitch

More and more companies are experimenting with word-of-mouth marketing, in which consumers either volunteer or get paid to sing a product's praises to their friends and neighbors. You might think that these covert marketers' credibility would diminish if they admitted to being part of an organized campaign—but you'd be wrong, according to a Northeastern University study. Such advertising, the study finds, is more effective when the person spreading the word admits

up front to being part of an advertising campaign. None of the metrics of a campaign's success—from the credibility of the sales pitch to the likelihood that someone would eventually purchase the product in question—was adversely affected when the marketers admitted to being part of a marketing effort, and people were actually more likely to pass the sales pitch along to someone else if they knew that it was part of a campaign. To explain this phenomenon, the study notes that there was “higher conversational quality”—that is, the discussion was both more relaxed and more in-depth—during exchanges where the marketers admitted their affiliations. And the author speculates that telling people they've been targeted by a word-of-mouth marketing campaign makes them feel

special—as if they've been handpicked to receive new or “inside” information.

—“To Tell or Not to Tell?: Assessing the Practical Effects of Disclosure for Word-of-Mouth Marketing Agents and Their Conversational Partners,” Walter J. Carl, Northeastern University

The Greening of America

Climate change may be bad for ice caps, permafrost, and coastal cities, but it could be good news for U.S. agriculture, a study from the AEI-Brookings Joint Center for Regulatory Studies suggests. Using a long-range climate-change model from Britain's Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research, the authors project that global warming will lead to increased precipitation and longer growing seasons across the United States over the next century. The resulting productivity gains could effect a 3.4 percent increase in annual profits for U.S. agriculture, or \$1.1 billion a year overall. These gains won't be evenly distributed, however: the states most likely to benefit are Pennsylvania and South Dakota, where the model predicts increased profits of \$570 million and \$540 million, respectively; the big losers will be Colorado (–\$610 million), Oklahoma (–\$580 million), and especially California, which stands to lose \$2.4 billion a year in agricultural profits if the study's model proves accurate.

—“The Economic Impacts of Climate Change: Evidence From Agricultural Profits and Random Fluctuations in Weather,” O. Deschenes and M. Greenstone, AEI-Brookings

For links to the documents discussed in these pages visit www.theatlantic.com/doc/200605/primarysources.

150 YEARS OF THE ATLANTIC

Nature & Environment

*This is the fourth in a series of archival excerpts in honor of the magazine's 150th anniversary. This installment is introduced by Bill McKibben, the author of *The End of Nature*, *Wandering Home*, and the forthcoming *Deep Economy*.*



AMERICA'S SINGLE GREATEST CLAIM to literary pre-eminence may lie in its writings about the natural world. Writers in every corner of the globe have always told stories of relationships among people, or among peoples and their gods. But Americans came to full literary consciousness while much of their land was yet to be deforested, drained, cleared, developed. It is the fraught relationship between man and nature that suffuses many of the best American novels, poems, and stories—and that many of the most eloquent and impassioned American essays take as their central subject.

The voices showcased here gave rise to movements. Out walking in the wilderness, birthing a million backpackers who would follow, Henry David Thoreau was the proto-environmentalist. And John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club (a forefather of modern NGOs), drew upon his ecstatic grammar of the wild to issue an urgent call that would inspire and be echoed by a million analogous groups around the world. America collided with nature, and it was these writers and

thinkers who let out the yelp. But if some of these voices expressed apprehension and prodded readers to action, others comforted and supplied the balm. Annie Dillard offered a wry perspective on the planet's profligacy, Sarah Orne Jewett contemplated—albeit a bit tremulously—the great chain of decay and rebirth, and John Burroughs (the single most popular nature writer in America for many decades) articulated his serene conviction that Charles Darwin could help us to see the divine underfoot.

At present, we find ourselves facing ecological damage that even these writers, so keenly attuned to the topic, could not have anticipated: the earth has become what one group of scientists has called the “anthroposphere,” its physics, chemistry, and biology now driven by our habits and desires. The reformist energy unleashed by the metaphors and images of our great green writers, which accomplished so much for so long, has mostly dwindled away. If we are to confront these new perils, and the endless consumption and carelessness that advance them, we need strong new writing about our responsibilities to one another, and about the possibilities that yet remain for delight in the natural world. We need the next metaphor. And if our history is a reliable guide, it will surely come. —BILL MCKIBBEN

For the full text of these articles, visit www.theatlantic.com/ideastour.

WALKING

June 1862

BY HENRY DAVID THOREAU

.....

*Henry David Thoreau, the naturalist, philosopher, and author of such classics as *Walden* and “Civil Disobedience,” contributed a number of writings to The Atlantic in its early years. The month after his death from tuberculosis, in May 1862, the magazine published “Walking,” one of his most famous essays, which extolled the virtues of immersing oneself in nature and lamented the inevitable encroachment of private ownership upon the wilderness.*

It requires a direct dispensation from Heaven to become a walker. You must be born into the family of the Walkers. *Ambulator nascitur, non fit.* Some of my townsmen, it is true, can remember and have described to me some walks which they took ten years ago, in which they were so blessed

as to lose themselves for half an hour in the woods; but I know very well that they have confined themselves to the highway ever since, whatever pretensions they may make to belong to this select class ...

The walking of which I speak has nothing in it akin to taking exercise, as it is called, as the sick take medicine at stated hours,—as the swinging of dumbbells or chairs; but is itself the enterprise and adventure of the day. If you would get exercise, go in search of the springs of life. Think of a man's swinging dumbbells for his health, when those springs are bubbling up in far-off pastures unsought by him!

Moreover, you must walk like a camel, which is said to be the only beast which ruminates when walking. When a traveller asked Wordsworth's servant to show him her master's study, she answered, “Here is his library, but his study is out of doors” ...

I can easily walk ten, fifteen, twenty, any number of miles, commencing at my own door, without going by any house, without crossing a road except where the fox and



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the mink do: first along by the river, and then the brook, and then the meadow and the wood-side. There are square miles in my vicinity which have no inhabitant. From many a hill I can see civilization and the abodes of man afar. The farmers and their works are scarcely more obvious than woodchucks and their burrows. Man and his affairs, church and state and school, trade and commerce, and manufactures and agriculture, even politics, the most alarming of them all,—I am pleased to see how little space they occupy in the landscape ...

At present, in this vicinity, the best part of the land is not private property; the landscape is not owned, and the walker enjoys comparative freedom. But possibly the day will come when it will be partitioned off into so-called pleasure-grounds, in which a few will take a narrow and exclusive pleasure only,—when fences shall be multiplied, and man-traps and other engines invented to confine men to the *public* road, and walking over the surface of God's earth shall be construed to mean trespassing on some gentleman's grounds. To enjoy a thing exclusively is commonly to exclude yourself from the true enjoyment of it. Let us improve our opportunities, then, before the evil days come.

Volume 9, No. 56, pp. 657-674

RIVER DRIFTWOOD

October 1881

BY SARAH ORNE JEWETT

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In 1881, Maine writer Sarah Orne Jewett (who would later go on to write the classic novel The Country of the Pointed Firs) was moved by a journey along a local river to thoughtful musing on the ruthlessness of nature and the interconnectedness of living things.

At the head of tide-water on the river there is a dam, and above it is a large mill-pond, where most of the people who row and sail keep their boats all summer long. I like, perhaps once a year, to cruise around the shores of this pretty sheet of water ...

The great gulls watch me float along the river, curiously, and sail in the air overhead. Who knows what they say of me when they talk together; and what are they thinking about when they fly quickly out of sight? Perhaps they know something about me that I do not know of myself yet; and so may the musk-rat, as he hurries through the water with a little green branch in his mouth which will make a salad for his supper. He watches me with his sharp eyes, and whisks into his hole in the sunny side of the island. I have a respect for him; he is a busy creature, and he lives well. You might be hospitable and ask me to supper, musk-rat! I don't know whether I should care much for you if

I were another musk-rat, or you were a human being, but I shall know you again when I see you by an odd mark in the fur on the top of your head, and that is something. I suppose the captive mussels in your den are quaking now at hearing you come in. I have lost sight of you, but I shall remember where your house is. I do not think people are thankful enough who live out of the reach of beasts that would eat them. When one thinks of whole races of small creatures like the mussels which are the natural and proper food of others, it seems an awful fact and necessity of nature; perhaps, however, no more awful than our natural death appears to us. But there is something distressing about being eaten, and having one's substance minister to a superior existence! It hurts one's pride. A death that preserves and elevates our identity is much more consoling and satisfactory; but what can reconcile a bird to its future as part of the tissues of a cat, going stealthily afoot, and by nature treacherous? Who can say, however, that our death is not only a link in the chain? One thing is made the prey of another. In some way our present state ministers to the higher condition to which we are coming. The grass is made somehow from the ground, and presently that is turned into beef, and that goes to make part of a human being. We are not certain what an angel may be; but the life in us now will be necessary to the making of one by and by.

Volume 48, No. 288, pp. 500-510

THE AMERICAN FORESTS

August 1897

BY JOHN MUIR

.....

Years after westward-moving settlers had felled and burned much of the country's woodland, the crusading naturalist John Muir urged Americans to safeguard the forests that remained. Spurred in part by Muir, President Theodore Roosevelt launched a major conservation program, creating the U.S. Forest Service in 1905 and preserving millions of acres of American wilderness.

The forests of America, however slighted by man, must have been a great delight to God; for they were the best he ever planted. The whole continent was a garden, and from the beginning it seemed to be favored above all the other wild parks and gardens of the globe. To prepare the ground, it was rolled and sifted in seas with infinite loving deliberation and forethought, lifted into the light, submerged and warmed over and over again, pressed and crumpled into folds and ridges, mountains and hills, subsoiled with heaving volcanic fires, ploughed and ground and sculptured into scenery and soil with glaciers and rivers,—every feature growing and changing from beauty to

beauty, higher and higher. And in the fullness of time it was planted in groves, and belts, and broad, exuberant, mantling forests, with the largest, most varied, most fruitful, and most beautiful trees in the world ...

So [the forests] appeared a few centuries ago when they were rejoicing in wildness. The Indians with stone axes could do them no more harm than could gnawing beavers and browsing moose. Even the fires of the Indians and the fierce shattering lightning seemed to work together only for good in clearing spots here and there for smooth garden prairies, and openings for sunflowers seeking the light. But when the steel axe of the white man rang out in the startled air their doom was sealed. Every tree heard the bodeful sound, and pillars of smoke gave the sign in the sky ...

Many of nature's five hundred kinds of wild trees had to make way for orchards and cornfields. In the settlement and civilization of the country, bread more than timber or beauty was wanted; and in the blindness of hunger, the early settlers, claiming Heaven as their guide, regarded God's trees as only a larger kind of pernicious weeds, extremely hard to get rid of. Accordingly, with no eye to the future, these pious destroyers waged interminable forest wars; chips flew thick and fast; trees in their beauty fell crashing by millions, smashed to confusion, and the smoke of their burning has been rising to heaven more than two hundred years ...

Surely, then, it should not be wondered at that lovers of their country, bewailing its baldness, are now crying aloud, "Save what is left of the forests!" Clearing has surely now gone far enough; soon timber will be scarce, and not a grove will be left to rest in or pray in ...

So far our government has done nothing effective with its forests, though the best in the world, but is like a rich and foolish spendthrift who has inherited a magnificent estate in perfect order, and then has left his rich fields and meadows, forests and parks, to be sold and plundered and wasted at will ...

Any fool can destroy trees. They cannot run away; and if they could, they would still be destroyed,—chased and hunted down as long as fun or a dollar could be got out of their bark hides, branching horns, or magnificent bole backbones. Few that fell trees plant them; nor would planting avail much towards getting back anything like the noble primeval forests. During a man's life only saplings can be grown, in the place of the old trees—tens of centuries old—that have been destroyed. It took more than three thousand years to make some of the trees in these Western woods,—trees that are still standing in perfect strength and beauty, waving and singing in the mighty forests of the Sierra. Through all the wonderful, eventful centuries since Christ's time—and long before that—God has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches, and a thousand straining, leveling tempests and floods; but he cannot save them from fools,—only Uncle Sam can do that.

Volume 80, No. 478, pp. 145–157

THE DIVINE SOIL

April 1908

BY JOHN BURROUGHS

.....

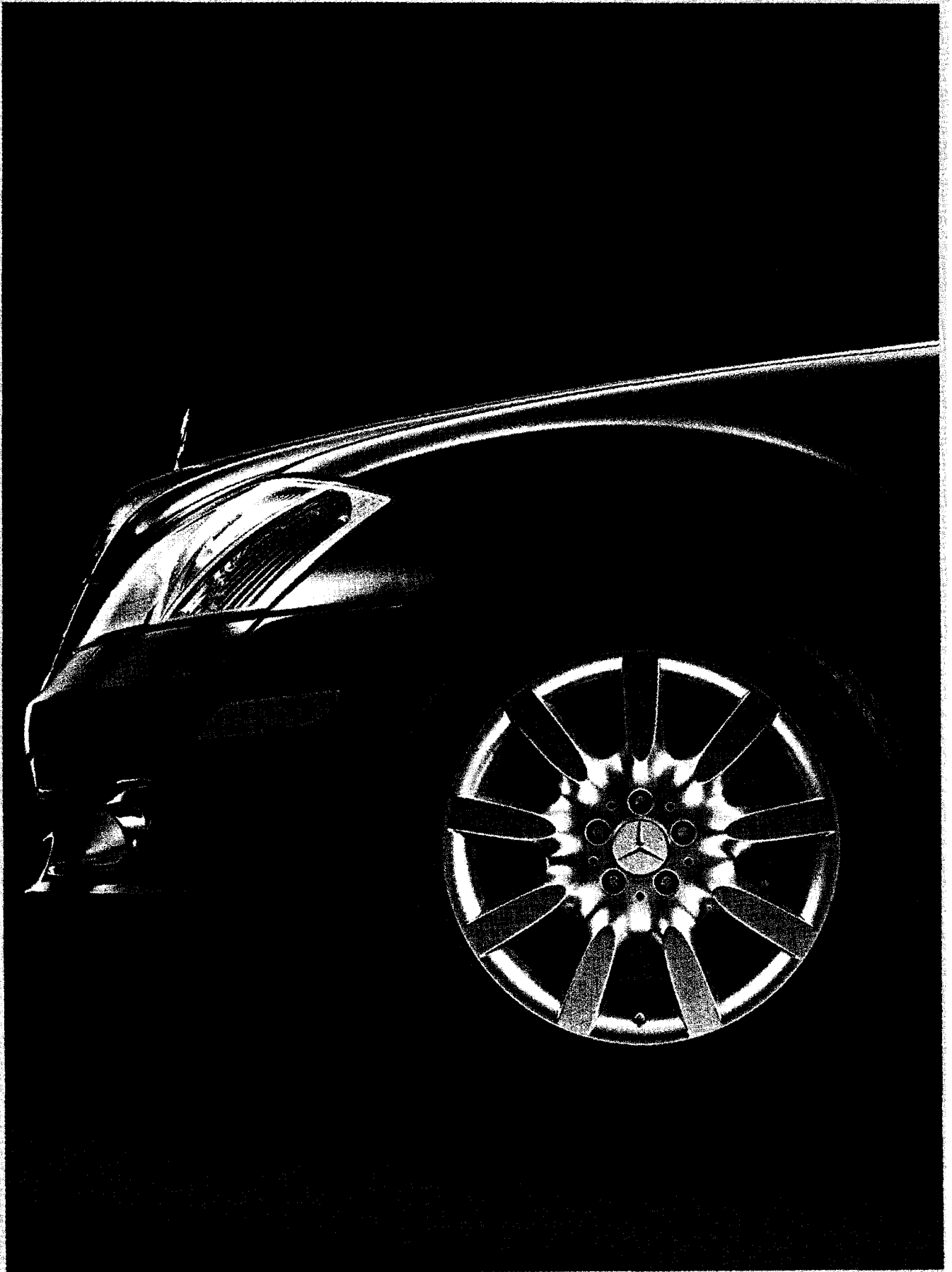
John Burroughs, a popular nature writer whose circle of friends included Walt Whitman, John Muir, and Theodore Roosevelt, argued in 1908 that Charles Darwin's theory of evolution should be viewed not as an insult to the dignity of humanity but as evidence of the divine in nature.

When Darwin published his conclusion that man was descended from an apelike ancestor who was again descended from a still lower type, most people were shocked by the thought; it was intensely repugnant to their feelings. Carlyle, for instance, treated the proposition with contempt. He called it the "gospel of dirt." "A good sort of man," he said, "is this Darwin, and well meaning, but with very little intellect" ...

One of the hardest lessons we have to learn in this life, and one that many persons never learn, is to see the divine, the celestial, the pure, in the common, the near at hand—to see that heaven lies about us here in this world ... Why, we have invented the whole machinery of the supernatural, with its unseen spirits and powers good and bad, to account for things, because we found the universal everyday nature too cheap, too common, too vulgar. We have had to cap the natural with the supernatural to satisfy our love for the marvelous and the inexplicable. As soon as a thing is brought within our ken, and the region of our experience, it seems to lose caste and be cheapened ...

It jars upon our sensibilities and disturbs our preconceived notions to be told that the spiritual has its roots in the carnal and is as truly its product as the flower is the product of the roots and the stalk of the plant. The conception does not cheapen or degrade the spiritual, it elevates the carnal, the material. To regard the soul and body as one, or to ascribe to consciousness a physiological origin, is not detracting from its divinity, it is rather conferring divinity upon the body. One thing is inevitably linked with another, the higher forms with the lower forms, the butterfly with the grub, the flower with the root, the food we eat with the thought we think, the poem we write, or the picture we paint, with the processes of digestion and nutrition. How science has enlarged and ennobled and purified our conception of the universe; how it has cleaned out the evil spirits that have so long terrified mankind, and justified the verdict of the Creator: "and behold it was good." With its indestructibility of matter, its conservation of energy, its inviolability of cause and effect, its unity of force and elements throughout sidereal space, it has prepared the way for a conception of man, his origin, his development, and in a measure his destiny, that at last makes him at home in the universe.

The lesson which life repeats and constantly enforces is, "Look under foot." You are always nearer the divine and the



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Volume 101, No. 4, pp. 440-449

THE SOUND OF TREES

August 1915

BY ROBERT FROST

.....

Though Frost's first submission to The Atlantic was rejected, he went on to become a regular contributor, ultimately publishing thirty-one of his poems in the magazine. This poem, like much of his verse, paid homage to the natural world while teasing out hidden, sometimes darker, meanings.

I wonder about the trees:
Why do we wish to bear
Forever the noise of these
More than another noise
So close to our dwelling place?
We suffer them by the day
Till we lose all measure of pace
And fixity in our joys,
And acquire a listening air.
They are that that talks of going
But never gets away;
And that talks no less for knowing,
As it grows wiser and older,
That now it means to stay.
My feet tug at the floor
And my head sways to my shoulder
Sometimes when I watch trees sway
From the window or the door.
I shall set forth for somewhere,
I shall make the reckless choice,
Some day when they are in voice
And tossing so as to scare
The white clouds over them on.
I shall have less to say,
But I shall be gone.

Volume 116, No. 2, p. 224

THE FORCE THAT DRIVES THE FLOWER

November 1973

BY ANNIE DILLARD

.....

In the summer of 1973, observing an especially fertile growing season outside her home in the Blue Ridge Mountains, the poet and essayist Annie Dillard waxed philosophical about the life cycle and the universal impulse to grow and reproduce. Her essay collection Pilgrim at Tinker Creek was published the following year to widespread acclaim, earning her a Pulitzer Prize.

Now, in late June in the Blue Ridge, things are popping outside. Creatures extrude or vent eggs; larvae fatten, split their shells, and eat them; spores dissolve or explode; root hairs multiply, corn puffs on the stalk, grass yields seed, shoots erupt from the earth turgid and sheathed; wet muskrats, rabbits, and squirrels slide into the sunlight, mewling and blind; and everywhere watery cells divide and swell, swell and divide. I can like it and call it birth and regeneration, or I can play the devil's advocate and call it rank fecundity—and say that it's hell that's a-poppin' ...

The driving force behind all this fecundity is a terrible pressure I also must consider, the pressure of birth and growth, the pressure that squeezes out the egg and bursts the pupa, that hungers and lusts and drives the creature relentlessly toward its own death. Fecundity, then, is what I have been thinking about, fecundity and the pressure of growth. Fecundity is an ugly word for an ugly subject. It is ugly, at least, in the eggy animal world. I don't think it is for plants.

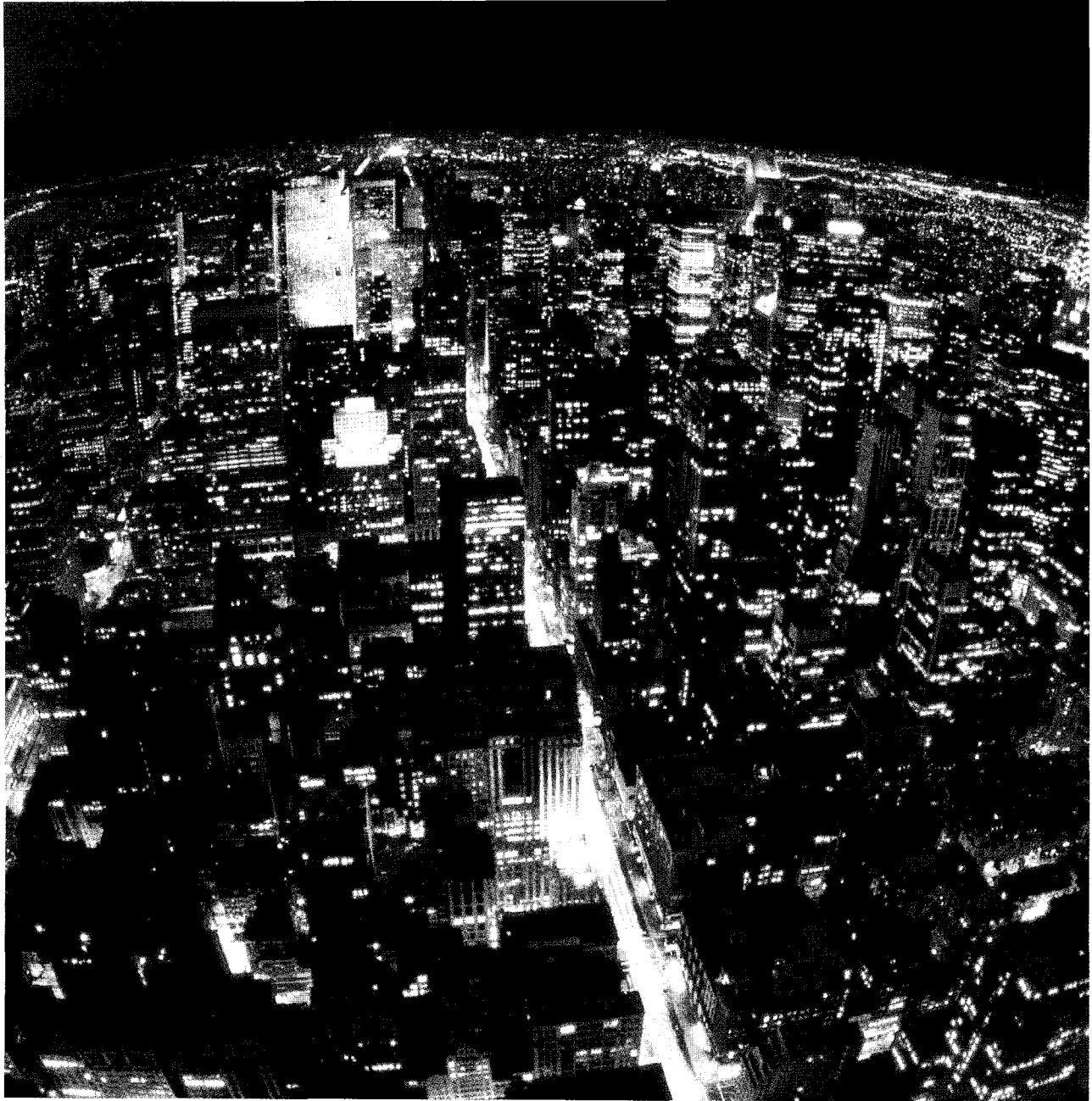
I never met a man who was shaken by a field of identical blades of grass. An acre of poppies and a forest of spruce boggle no one's mind. Even ten square miles of wheat gladdens the hearts of most people, although it is really as unnatural and freakish as the Frankenstein monster; if man were to die, I read, wheat wouldn't survive him more than three years.

No, in the plant world, and especially among the flowering plants, fecundity is not an assault on human values. Plants are not our competitors; they are our prey and our nesting materials ...

Even when the plants get in the way of human "culture," I don't mind. When I read how many thousands of dollars a city like New York has to spend to keep underground water pipes free of ailanthus, ginko, and sycamore roots, I cannot help but give a little cheer. After all, water pipes are almost always an excellent source of water. In a town where resourcefulness and beating the system are highly prized, these primitive trees can fight city hall and win.

Volume 232, No. 5, pp. 69-77

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THE DESERT ONE DEBACLE

In April 1980, President Jimmy Carter sent the Army's Delta Force to bring back fifty-three American citizens held hostage in Iran. Everything went wrong. The fireball in the Iranian desert took the Carter presidency with it

BY MARK BOWDEN

.....

WASHINGTON, D.C., APRIL 11, 1980, NOON

The meeting began with Jimmy Carter's announcement: "Gentlemen, I want you to know that I am seriously considering an attempt to rescue the hostages."

Hamilton Jordan, the White House chief of staff, knew immediately that the president had made a decision. Planning and practice for a rescue mission had been going on in secret for five months, but it had always been regarded as the last resort, and ever since the November 4 embassy takeover, the White House had made every effort to avoid it. As the president launched into a list of detailed questions about how it was to be done, his aides knew he had mentally crossed a line.

Carter had met the takeover in Iran with tremendous restraint, equating the national interest with the well-being of the fifty-three hostages, and his measured response had elicited a great deal of admiration, both at home and abroad. His approval ratings had doubled in the first month of the crisis. But in the following months, restraint had begun to smell like weakness and indecision. Three times in the past five months, carefully negotiated secret settlements had been ditched by the inscrutable Iranian mullahs, and the administration had been made to look more foolish each time. Approval ratings had nose-dived, and even stalwart friends of the administration were demanding action. Jimmy Carter's formidable patience was badly strained.

And the mission that had originally seemed so preposterous had gradually come to seem feasible. It was a two-day affair with a great many moving parts and very little room for error—one of the most daring thrusts in U.S. military history. It called for a nighttime rendezvous of helicopters and planes at a landing strip in the desert south of Tehran, where the choppers would refuel before carrying the raiding party to hiding places just outside the city. The whole force would then wait through the following day and assault the embassy compound on the second night, spiriting the hostages to a nearby soccer stadium from which the helicopters could take them to a seized airstrip outside the city, to the transport planes that would carry them to safety and freedom. With spring coming on,

the hours of darkness, needed to get the first part of this done, were shrinking fast.

Unrolling a big map, General David Jones, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, walked the president and his inner circle of advisers through the elaborate plan, pointing out the location of the initial landing and refueling site, called Desert One; the various hide-site locations; the embassy, in central Tehran; the soccer stadium; and the airfield. It was risky, but short of leaving the hostages to their fate or engaging in some punitive action against Iran that would further endanger them, the president had few options. Jordan could see the course of Carter's reluctant reasoning.

To maintain appearances, the president sent Jordan back to Paris for a scheduled second meeting with Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, the Iranian foreign minister, with whom Jordan had secretly worked out the most recent failed agreement. Carter had at last severed all formal diplomatic ties with Iran; in this second face-to-face session with Jordan, Ghotbzadeh called the break in relations a tragic mistake that would drive his country into the arms of the Soviets. He also confirmed that peaceful efforts to resolve the crisis were at an impasse, and predicted that it would be many months before the hostages might be released. He was apologetic, but said that for him to take a "soft" position on the issue at that point was tantamount to political, if not actual, suicide. "I just hope your president doesn't do anything rash," he added. Ghotbzadeh didn't know it, but his glum assessment clinched the decision to launch the rescue mission.

Colonel Charlie Beckwith, the creator of Delta Force, the Army's new, top-secret counterterrorism unit, was summoned to the White House. He and Carter, both proud Georgians, swapped stories about their neighboring home counties. Beckwith, a brave and commanding soldier, was a big, gruff man whose energy filled a room—and he had flaws as outsized as his virtues. He was a difficult man, proud, tough, and at times arrogant and capricious; these traits were aggravated when he drank, which was often. But at the White House he was on his best behavior, impressing the president with his aura of blunt certainty as he presented the proposed mission in ever greater detail.

Mark Bowden, an Atlantic national correspondent, is the author of Black Hawk Down. He has written a book about the hostage crisis and its aftermath, Guests of the Ayatollah, to be published by Grove/Atlantic in May.



The crew of an Air Force C-130 Hercules, seen just before the catastrophic rescue mission that would leave five of them dead

The colonel was an accomplished salesman. He had spent a career selling the idea of his elite unit, and now that it existed, he was eager to show what miracles it could perform. His enthusiasm was infectious. He and his men had been rehearsing the mission for so long that they could have done it in their sleep, and they were going to make history—not just cut this particular Gordian knot but write their names in the annals of military glory. In a sense, Beckwith's long crusade to create Delta Force had been a rebellion against the mechanization and bureaucratization of modern warfare. He held to an old and visceral conviction: that war was the business of brave men. He loved soldiers and soldiering, and his vision was of a company of men like himself: impatient with rank, rules, and politics, focused entirely on mission. He had created such a force, choosing the best of the best and training them to perfection. They were not just good, they were magnificent. And now he would lead them into battle.

They were nearly ready. Two small teams had already been in and out of Iran to scout the landing site at Desert One, and to find the hide sites and the vehicles that would carry the raiding party to the embassy. Eight RH-53D Sea Stallion helicopters and their crews were waiting below decks on the aircraft carrier *Nimitz*, which cruised in the Arabian Sea. Staging areas at Wadi Kena, an abandoned Soviet airstrip in Egypt, and on Masirah, an island off the coast of Oman, were being readied to receive Beckwith's men and planes. Dick Meadows, the leader of the team that had prepared the hide sites, was packing his bags for a return trip to Tehran, where he would wait to meet with the rest of the force on the first night of the mission. Moving everything into position would take about two weeks.

Technically, Carter had not yet given the go-ahead, but when Beckwith left the White House, he was certain he had sold the mission. He flew to Delta's stockade at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and immediately assembled his top men. "You can't tell the people; you can't tell anybody," he said. "Don't talk about this to anyone. But the president has approved the mission, and we're going to go on April 24."

GULF OF OMAN, APRIL 24, 1980, DUSK

Through the failing light a lone plane moved fast and low over dark waters toward the coast of Iran. It was a big four-propeller U.S. Air Force workhorse, a C-130 Hercules, painted in a mottled black-and-green camouflage that made it all but invisible against the black water and the night sky. It flew with no lights. Inside, in the eerie red glow of the plane's blackout lamps, seventy-four men struggled to get comfortable in a cramped, unaccommodating space. Only the eleven men of the plane's usual crew had assigned seats; the others sprawled on and around a Jeep, five motorcycles, two long sheets of heavy aluminum (to wedge under the plane's tires if it became stuck in desert sand), and a bulky portable guidance system that would help the other planes and helicopters find their way to Desert One. Their rendezvous was a flat, empty spot in the Dasht-e-Kavir salt desert, fifty-eight miles from Tabas, the nearest town.

Just after dark, the Hercules moved in over the coast of Iran at 250 feet, well below Iranian radar, and began a gradual ascent to 5,000 feet. It was still flying dangerously low even at that altitude, because the land rose up abruptly in row after row of jagged ridges—the Zagros Mountains, which looked jet black in the gray-green tints of the pilots'

night-vision goggles. Its terrain-hugging radar was so sensitive that even though the plane was safely above the peaks, the highest ridges triggered the loud, disconcerting horn of its warning system. The co-pilot kept one finger over the override button, poised to silence it.

The decision had been made to fly into Iran on fixed-wing transports rather than helicopters, and since then Beckwith had added still more men to "Eagle Claw," as the rescue mission was now code-named. Most notable among them were a group of soldiers from the 75th Ranger Regiment, out of Fort Benning, Georgia, who would block off both ends of the dirt road that angled through Desert One and man Redeye missile launchers to protect the force on the first night in the event it was discovered and attacked from the air. A separate thirteen-man Army Special Forces team would assault the foreign ministry to free the three diplomats being held there: Bruce Laingen, Victor Tomseth, and Mike Howland. Also on Beckwith's lead plane was John Carney, an Air Force major from the team that had slipped into Iran weeks earlier to scout the desert landing strip and bury infrared lights to mark a runway. He would command a small Air Force combat-control team that would orchestrate the complex maneuvers at the impromptu airfield.

Some of these men sat on and around the Jeep. The mood was relaxed. If there was one trait these men shared, it was professional calm.

The mission was a two-day affair with many moving parts and very little room for error—one of the most daring thrusts in U.S. military history.

They had taken off at dusk from the tiny island of Masirah. An hour behind them would come five more C-130s—one of them carrying most of the remainder of Beckwith's assault force, which now numbered 132 men; three serving as "bladder planes," each one's hold occupied by two gigantic rubber balloons filled with fuel; and a back-up fuel plane carrying the last Deltas and pieces of sophisticated telecommunications-monitoring equipment.

Days earlier the entire force had flown from Florida to Egypt on big Army jet transports. His mission under way, Beckwith had been wound tight, at once anxious and arrogant. To the pilot's question "Where are we going?" he'd answered, "Just shut up and fly, and I'll tell you when to stop." They spent a few days at Wadi Kena, which had been amply outfitted for their arrival, with two refrigerators and pallets full of beer and soda. When the refrigerators were finally emptied of beer, they were stocked with blood.

On the morning of the mission, the men had assembled in a warehouse, where Major Jerry Boykin had offered a prayer. Tall and lean, with a long, dark beard, Boykin stood at a podium before a plug box where electrical wires intersected and formed a big cross on the wall. Behind him was a

poster-sized sheet displaying photographs of the Americans held hostage. Boykin chose a passage from the first Book of Samuel:

And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in the forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell on his face to the earth. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone ...

They had flown from Wadi Kena to Masirah, where they had hunkered in tents through a bright and broiling afternoon, fighting off large stinging flies and waiting impatiently for dusk. They would make a four-hour flight over the Gulf of Oman and across Iran to Desert One. The route had been calculated to exploit gaps in Iran's coastal defenses, and to avoid passing over military bases and populated areas. Major Wayne Long, Delta's intelligence officer, was at a console in the telecommunications plane with a National Security Agency linguist, who was monitoring Iranian telecommunications for any sign that the aircraft had been discovered and the mission compromised. None came.

Not long after the lead plane departed Masirah, eight Sea Stallions left the *Nimitz* and moved out over the gulf in order to make landfall shortly after sunset. The choppers took their own route, crossing into Iran between the towns of Jask and Konarak, and flying even closer to the ground than the planes. Word of the successful helicopter launch—"Eight off the deck"—reached those in the lead plane as especially welcome news, because they had expected only seven. Earlier reports had indicated that the eighth was having mechanical problems. Eight widened the margin of error.

The men expected breakdowns. In their many rehearsals, they had determined that six choppers were essential for carrying all the men and equipment from Desert One to the hide sites. The load was finely calibrated; every assaulter had an assigned limit and was weighed to make sure he met it. Not all six choppers would be needed to haul the hostages and assaulters from the stadium the next night (two would do in a pinch), but some of the aircraft that made it to the hideouts were expected to fail the next morning. If seven were enough, eight provided comfort.

The final decision to launch had come earlier that day, after Dick Meadows, Delta's advance man, broadcast a signal from Tehran that all was ready. He had returned to the city disguised as an Irish businessman, and had met up with "Fred," his Iranian-American guide and interpreter, and with two U.S. soldiers who had themselves entered Iran as Irish and West German businessmen. They had spent that day reconnoitering all of the various hide sites, the embassy, the foreign ministry, and the soccer stadium.

As the lead plane pushed on into Iran, Major Bucky Burruss, Beckwith's deputy, was on the second C-130, sprawled on a mattress near the front of the plane. Burruss was still somewhat startled to find himself on the actual mission, although there was still no telling if they were really going to go through with it. One thing President Carter had insisted on was the option of calling off the raid

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right up to the last minute: right before they were to storm the embassy walls. To make sure they could get real-time instructions from Washington, a satellite radio and relay system had been put in place at Wadi Kena.

Another presidential directive concerned the use of nonlethal riot-control agents. Given that the shah's occasionally violent riot control during the revolution was now Exhibit A in Iran's human-rights case against the former regime and America, Carter wanted to avoid killing Iranians, so he had insisted that if a hostile crowd formed during the raid, Delta should attempt to control it without shooting people. Burruss considered this ridiculous. He and his men were

going to assault a guarded compound in the middle of a city of more than 5 million people, most of them presumed to be aggressively hostile. It was unbelievably risky; everyone on the mission knew there was a very good chance they would not get home alive. Wade Ishimoto, a Delta captain who worked with the unit's intelligence division, had joked, "The only difference between this and the Alamo is that Davy Crockett didn't have to fight his way in." And Carter had the idea that this vastly outnumbered force was first going to try holding off the city with nonviolent crowd control? Burruss understood the president's thinking on this, but with their hides so nakedly on the line, shouldn't they be free to decide how best to defend themselves? He had complained about the directive to General Jones, who had said he would look into it, but the answer had come back "No, the president insists." So Burruss had made his own peace with it. He had with him one tear-gas grenade—one—which he intended to throw as soon as necessary; he would then use its smoke as a marker to call in devastatingly lethal 40 mm AC-130 gunship fire.

Delta was made up of men who would have felt crushed to be excluded from this mission. They were ambitious for glory. They had volunteered to serve with Beckwith and had undergone the trials of a grueling selection process precisely to serve in improbable exploits like this. Some of the men had read about wildly heroic feats in history and longed to have taken part; here was such a moment. If they pulled it off, it would go down as one of the boldest maneuvers in military history. They would snatch the innocent Americans from the jaws of the Islamist dragon. Their nation would cheer them in the streets!

The fact that people wouldn't know exactly whom they were toasting made it all the more appealing. The heroism would be pure. They as individuals would not be celebrated—only their achievement. None of these men would be in ticker-tape parades, or sitting down for interviews on national TV, or having their pictures on the covers of magazines, or cashing in on fat book contracts. They were quiet professionals. In a world of brag and hype, they embodied



President Carter on the day of the tragedy, April 25, 1980

substance. They would come home and, after a few days off, go right back to work. Of course, within their own world they would not just be respected; they would be legends. For the rest of their lives, knowing soldiers would murmur, "He was on Eagle Claw."

They were a motley, deliberately unmilitary-looking bunch of young men. In fact, they looked a lot like the students who had seized the embassy. Most were just a few years older than the hostage-takers. They had long hair and had grown moustaches and beards, or at least gone unshaven. Many of those with fair hair had dyed it dark brown or black, figuring that might nudge the odds at least slightly in their favor if they

were forced to fight their way out of Iran. The loose-fitting, many-pocketed field jackets they wore, also dyed black, were just like the ones favored by young men in Iran. Under the Geneva Conventions, soldiers (as opposed to spies) must enter combat in uniform, so for the occasion the men all wore matching black knit caps and on their jacket sleeves had American flags that could be covered by small black Velcro patches. On the streets of Tehran the flags would invite trouble, but inside the embassy compound they would reassure the hostages that they weren't just being kidnapped by some rival Iranian faction. The men wore faded blue jeans and combat boots, and beneath their jackets some wore armored vests. Much of their gear was improvised. They had sewn additional pockets inside the jackets to carry weapons, ammo, and water. Most of the men carried sidearms, grenades, small MP-5 submachine guns with silencers, and various explosive devices.

Beckwith had insisted on a Ranger tradition: each man carried clips and a length of rope wrapped around his waist, in case the need arose to rappel. With his white stubble, dangling cigarette or cigar, and wild eyes under thick dark eyebrows, Beckwith himself looked like a dangerous vagrant. Before leaving Masirah, the men had joked about which actors would portray them in the movie version of the raid, and they decided that the hillbilly actor Slim Pickens, who in Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* had ridden a nuclear weapon down into doomsday waving his cowboy hat and hallooing, would be the perfect choice for the colonel.

DESERT ONE, APRIL 24, LATE EVENING

As the lead plane closed in on the landing site, its pilots noted curious milky patches in the night sky. They flew through one that appeared to be just haze, not even substantial enough to interfere with the downward-looking radar. They approached a second one as they got closer to the landing site. John Carney, who had come into the cockpit to be ready to activate the landing lights he had buried on his trip weeks earlier, was asked, "What do you make of that stuff out there?"

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He looked through the co-pilot's window and answered, "You're in a *haboob*."

The men in the cockpit laughed at the word.

"No, we're flying through suspended dust," Carney explained. "The Iranians call it a *haboob*."

He had learned this from the CIA pilots who had flown him in earlier. Shifting air pressure sometimes forced especially fine desert sand straight up thousands of feet, where it hung like a vertical cloud for hours. It was just a desert curiosity, nothing that could cause a problem for the planes. But Air Force Colonel James H. Kyle, whose responsibility included all airborne aspects of the mission, knew that the *haboob* would be trouble for a helicopter. He had noticed that the temperature inside the plane went up significantly when they passed through the first *haboob*. He conferred with the plane's crew, and suggested they break radio silence and call "Red Barn," the command center at Wadi Kena, to warn the helicopter formation behind them. The chopper pilots might want to break formation or fly higher to avoid the stuff. It took the lead plane about thirty minutes to fly through this second patch, indicating that it extended about a hundred miles.

As the C-130 approached the landing area, Carney activated his runway lights, but just then the plane's newfangled FLIR (forward-looking infrared radar) detected something moving, which proved to be a truck hurtling along the dirt road that ran through the landing site. The pilots passed over the spot and then circled back around. On the second pass the stretch of desert was clear. They circled around for the third time and touched down—Logan Fitch, a tall Texan and one of Delta's squadron leaders, was amazed by how smoothly. The plane coasted to a stop, and when the back ramp was lowered, the Rangers roared off in the Jeep and on a motorcycle to give chase to the truck. Word that an American plane had landed in the desert, relayed promptly to the right people, could defeat the whole effort.

The hard-packed surface of three weeks prior was now coated with a layer of sand the consistency of baby powder—ankle-deep in some places—that accounted for the extraordinary softness of their landing. This fine sand made it more difficult to taxi the plane, and the backwash from the propellers kicked up a serious dust storm.

Fitch followed with his men, walking down the ramp and stepping into a cauldron of noise and dust. His team had nothing to do at Desert One except wait to offload camouflage netting and other equipment from the second C-130 when it arrived, then board helicopters for the short trip to the hiding places. The big plane's propellers were still roaring and kicking up sand. Shielding his eyes with an upraised arm, Fitch turned to his right and was shocked to see, coming straight toward him, a bus! Literally out of nowhere. The odds that the plane would encounter one vehicle at midnight on



Colonel Charlie Beckwith, founder and commander of the Delta Force

such an isolated desert road were vanishingly small, but there it was, honoring an absolute law of military operations: the inevitability of the unexpected. This second vehicle was a big Mercedes passenger bus, piled high with luggage, lit up like midday inside, and filled with more than forty astonished Iranian passengers.

Suddenly the night desert flashed as bright as daylight and shook with an explosion. In the near distance, a giant ball of flame rose high into the darkness. One of the Rangers had fired an anti-tank weapon at the fleeing truck, which turned out to have been loaded with fuel. It burned like a miniature sun. So much for slipping quietly into Iran.

This clandestine rendezvous spot, this patch of desert in the middle of nowhere, was lit up like a Friday-night football game in Texas. The men with night-vision goggles removed them. At least one of the truck's occupants had bailed out, climbed into a trailing pickup truck (three vehicles!), and escaped at high speed. A Ranger gave chase on the motorcycle but couldn't catch up.

In this sudden glow the bus now rolled to a stop with a leaking radiator and a flat right-front tire. Rangers had fired their weapons to disable it. Fitch, still confused, sent Delta machine-gun teams to both sides of the stalled, steaming vehicle, and led a group of his men to the front. Some Rangers were already aboard.

Fitch mounted the steps and asked a Ranger sergeant, "What the hell is going on?"

"I'm trying to get these people off the bus, but they won't move," the sergeant said. The passengers were clearly bewildered. "Should I fire a shot over their heads?" he asked.

"No," Fitch said. "Why don't you just get off the bus, and I'll get my people in here."

One of Delta's specialties was handling hostages—herding them, searching them, securing them. In the next few minutes, Fitch's men firmly and efficiently emptied the bus and searched the passengers for weapons. They then stripped the baggage off the top of the bus and searched it, finding no weapons. The passengers appeared to be poor Iranians, simply traveling through the night from Yazd to Tabas. The bus was decorated with placards and posters of the Ayatollah Khomeini. It had rolled into the wrong place at the wrong time.

The question of what to do with the passengers was relayed all the way to the White House. The president and his staff were deliberately going through the late-afternoon motions of a typical workday but secretly hanging on every update from the desert.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, the national-security adviser, relayed the unexpected problem of the bus to the president, and Carter agreed that the only thing to do was to fly all the Iranians out that night on one of the C-130s and then return them to Iran when the mission was complete.

Shortly after midnight things grew louder and busier as the second C-130 roared in for a landing, right on schedule, and taxied to a stop. Behind it were the three fuel tankers and the communications plane. As Burruss and his men came down the lowered ramp of their plane, they gaped at the ball of flame, the bus, and the passengers sitting on the sand.

"Welcome to World War Three!" Fitch greeted them.

Desert One was now looking more like an airport, and Carney's men were busy directing traffic, preparing for the arrival of the helicopters. Within the hour, all three C-130 bladder planes were positioned and parked, along with the communications plane. The first two C-130s would return to Masirah before the arrival of the helicopters, clearing space at the landing site.

The unloading had gone pretty much as planned, with one exception: the second C-130 had landed a few thousand feet farther away from the landing zone than expected, so the job of transferring the camouflage netting from it to the choppers was correspondingly bigger. The netting would be draped over the helicopters at their hiding places at daylight. It was not an especially warm night in the desert, but all the men were overdressed in layers of clothing, and they were sweating heavily with exertion. Moving through the loose sand made the task even more difficult. The Air Force crews struggled to unfurl hundreds of pounds of hoses from the parked tankers, for fueling the choppers. The bus would have to be moved, so all the passengers were herded back on.

A Delta Force intelligence officer had joked, "The only difference between this and the Alamo is that Davy Crockett didn't have to fight his way in."

"What is the status of the choppers?" Beckwith asked over a secure satellite radio.

The command station at Wadi Kena responded by relaying a request from the lead chopper for conditions at Desert One.

"Visibility five miles with negative surface winds," reported Colonel Kyle, who was with Beckwith.

Then they heard from the lead chopper, which had a secure satellite radio similar to Beckwith's at Desert One: "Fifty minutes out and low on fuel."

The fuel crews were poised. They were capable of working like pit crews at the Indy 500. It would take only ten minutes to refill a landed chopper and send it on its way, but everything was behind schedule, which meant that even if the refueling and loading were done perfectly, the choppers would not get to their hiding places before dawn. That posed only a small risk, as the sites were in mountains outside the city, the choppers had been painted the same colors as the Iranian army's helicopters, and it would still be fairly dark when they arrived. Still, if they didn't land

at Desert One soon, they would be getting to their hiding places in broad daylight.

There was nothing to do but wait. Most of the force had been on the ground for more than two hours. Stirred by the idling aircraft, sand whipped around the men, stinging their faces and making it difficult to see. The choppers were late and getting later. But they had been late in every one of the rehearsals, so no one was surprised.

INSIDE THE *HABOOB*, APRIL 24, MIDNIGHT

Already, the Sea Stallions were down to six.

The original formation of eight had crossed into Iran flying at 200 feet and then moved down to 100 feet. Two of the choppers were having difficulty with their navigation equipment, but flying that close to the ground they could steer by using landmarks and by staying with the formation. They were not allowed to communicate over their non-secure radios, lest they be overheard by Iranian defenses, but they had practiced flashing lights as signals. They flew in a staggered line of four pairs. Not far inside Iran, the helicopter crews spotted part of the trailing formation of C-130s, which confirmed that the Sea Stallions were going the right way. Lieutenant Colonel Ed Seiffert, the flight leader and pilot of the first chopper, felt relaxed enough to take a break and have something to eat.

But the formation got only 140 miles into Iran before one of the choppers had trouble. In the cockpit of the sixth one in formation a warning light indicated that one of its blades had been hit by something or had cracked—a potentially fatal problem. That chopper immediately landed, followed by the one just behind it, and after determining that a rotor blade was in fact badly cracked, the pilots abandoned the damaged aircraft, removing all the classified documents inside, and climbed into chopper No. 8. It lifted off, gave chase, and eventually caught up with the others.

As they burned off fuel, the choppers picked up speed. They were closing in on Desert One. About 200 miles into Iran they saw before them what looked like a wall of whiteness: the first *haboob*. They flew right into it. Seiffert realized that it was suspended dust only when he tasted it and felt it in his teeth. If it was penetrating his cockpit, it was penetrating his engines. The temperature inside rose to 100 degrees. But then they were out of the cloud as suddenly as they had entered it. They had flown right through it.

Looming ahead was the second, much larger *haboob*, but Seiffert didn't know that. No warning from the lead C-130 had been relayed; the need to maintain radio silence, and to communicate in code if it was broken, had ultimately led Kyle to decide against making a report.

So the chopper formation passed into the second cloud assuming that it was no bigger than the first. But the *haboob* grew thicker and thicker, until Seiffert could no longer see the other choppers or the ground. The helicopters had turned on their outside safety lights, and off in the haze indistinct halos of red were strung out at varying distances. When the fuzzy beacons also vanished, Seiffert and his wingman made a U-turn, flew back out of the cloud, and landed. None of the

other five choppers had seen them land. Seiffert had hoped they would all follow him to the ground, where they could confer and decide on a strategy. Now he and his wingman had no choice but to take off and fly back into the soup, trying to catch up.

Major Jim Schaefer was now flying lead. One moment Seiffert's aircraft had been in front of him, and the next it was gone. One by one the indistinct red blobs in the milky haze had grown dimmer and dimmer, and then they, too, were gone. *How could I lose them?* Schaefer thought. He could see nothing, and he heard nothing but the sounds of his own engines. All around him was a smothering cloak of whiteness. He executed a "lost plane" maneuver, turning fifteen degrees off course for a few minutes, and then turning back on course, hoping to pick up the formation again. Even from as low as 200 feet, he could not see the ground.

He climbed to 1,000 feet and was still in the cloud. Inside the chopper it was hot and getting hotter. He descended, this time below 200 feet. Schaefer could see the ground only intermittently. For three hours they flew like this, on nerves and instruments. The cockpit was overheated, and the men in it were increasingly tense.

"Is there anything in front of us?" Schaefer asked his co-pilot, Les Petty.

"Well, there's a six-thousand-foot mountain in front of us," Petty replied.

"How soon?" Schaefer asked.

"I don't trust the machine," Petty said, "and I don't trust my map. I ain't seen the ground in three hours. I'd say right now."

So they started to climb. They climbed to 6,000 feet, and abruptly the dust cloud broke. Inside the chopper it was suddenly very cold. Off to one side Schaefer saw the peak of a mountain.

"Good job, Les," he said. "I love you."

Desert One was still about an hour away, so they plunged back into the *haboob*. This time Schaefer leveled off at 600 feet. He didn't know it, but the remaining six choppers were doing the same. The lack of visibility had made all the crews woozy. It was especially hard on the pilots, whose night-vision goggles distorted depth perception and intensified feelings of vertigo. The men were becoming thirsty in the extreme heat. They knew that more tall peaks lay between them and Desert One, and they could only hope that visibility improved in time for them to steer around or over them.

It was a struggle for all of them, and finally one pilot gave up. Lieutenant Commander Rodney Davis had watched the control lights in his cockpit indicate a number of equipment failures. His compass was not working, and his other navigation devices were being affected by the heat. His co-pilot was feeling sick. When he lost sight of the nearest chopper, Davis was alone in the *haboob*. He tried spiraling downward, a maneuver for relocating his wingman, but he couldn't see the other chopper and couldn't get a clear fix on anything below that would give him his exact position. Davis took his aircraft up to 9,000 feet and was still in the cloud. He was at a critical point in the flight. To press on meant he'd

have no chance of making it back to the carrier, for lack of fuel. Because he couldn't see ahead or down, he might steer off course or collide with a mountain on the way to Desert One. He conferred with Colonel Chuck Pitman, the ranking officer of the entire formation, who was riding in back. They assumed that with the other seven choppers still en route (they did not know that one had already been lost), they would not fatally compromise the mission by turning back.

So they turned around.

DESERT ONE, APRIL 25, 1:00 A.M.

At the landing strip, Delta Force waited anxiously as precious minutes of darkness continued to slip away. It was an enormous relief when the men heard the distinctive *whoop-whoop-whoop* of the first two helicopters.

Schaefer, in the lead chopper, saw a giant pillar of flame, and his first thought was that one of the C-130s had crashed and exploded. He flew over Desert One and counted four planes on the ground, exactly what he expected to find. *Thank you, Lord*, he said to himself.

He turned to land on a second pass, and as he came down he clipped a rut so hard that he knew he had damaged his aircraft. The tires on his landing gear were blown and knocked off the rims. He had been in the air for five hours. He was tired and relieved and had to piss. Like the planes, the choppers kept their engines running to lower the risk of a mechanical failure; most problems showed up after stopping and restarting. Schaefer and most of his crew got out and walked around behind their chopper to urinate, and there Schaefer was confronted by the eager Beckwith, trailed by Burruss, Kyle, and the other commanders.

"What the hell's going on?" the colonel asked. "How did you get so goddamn late?"

"First of all, we're only twenty-five minutes late," Schaefer said. "Second of all, I don't know where anyone else is, because we went into a big dust cloud."

"There's no goddamn dust cloud out here," Beckwith said, gesturing at the open sky. He had not been told about the *haboobs* on the way in.

"Well, there is one," Schaefer said. He told Beckwith that the conditions coming in had been the worst he had ever flown through. His men were badly shaken. His chopper still flew but had been damaged. He wasn't sure they could go on.

This was not what Beckwith wanted to hear.

"I'm going to report this thing," he said angrily. He thought the pilot looked shattered, as if the pressure had completely broken him down. He slapped Schaefer on the back and told him that he and the others were going to have to suck it up.

Two more choppers arrived, and one of them was having a problem. Captain B. J. McGuire's helicopter had been flying with a warning light on in the cockpit that indicated trouble with one of the hydraulic systems. Fitch was the first person to reach McGuire on landing.

"I'm so happy you are here!" Fitch said, shouting to be heard. "Where are the rest of the guys?"

"I don't know," McGuire said. "We don't have any communication."



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McGuire told Fitch about the problem with his helicopter. He said he thought the working hydraulic system was sufficiently trustworthy for him to continue.

When the last two choppers finally landed, it was cause for quiet celebration. It was now 1:30 in the morning, which gave the men just enough time to get everything done and hidden before full daylight. They had the required six helicopters. Some members of the assault force exchanged high fives. Seiffert soon had his pilots maneuvering their empty choppers into position behind the four tankers to refuel. Their wheels made deep tracks in the fine sand, and the turning rotors whipped up violent dust storms. The rotors and propellers were deafening, and all around the aircraft were fierce little sand squalls. The truck fire was still burning brightly.

Beckwith, impatient to get his men aboard the choppers and be off, climbed into the last one to land and tried to get the attention of Seiffert, who was coordinating these maneuvers from his cockpit.

"Request permission to load, Skipper," Beckwith said. "We need to get with it."

Seiffert either didn't hear him or ignored him. "Hey, remember me?" Beckwith asked. He then slapped the pilot's helmet. Seiffert took off his helmet and confronted Beckwith angrily.

"I can't guarantee we'll get you to the next site before first light."

"I don't care," Beckwith said.

Seiffert told him to go ahead and load his men.

Beckwith was moving from chopper to chopper, urging things forward, when another of the helicopter pilots stepped out and said, "The skipper told me to tell you we only have five flyable helicopters. That's what the skipper told me to tell you."

Looking around, the colonel could see that the rotor on one of the Sea Stallions had stopped turning. Someone had shut it down.

It was precisely what he had feared: these pilots were determined to scuttle his mission. It had not been lost on the other commanders, most of whom outranked Beckwith, that the pugnacious colonel regarded them all as inferiors, as supporting players. The pilots, the navigators, the air crews, the fuel-equipment operators, the Rangers, the combat controllers, the spies in Tehran, even the generals back at Wadi Kena—they were all ordinary mortals, squires, spear carriers, water boys. Their job was to serve Delta, to get the colonel and his magnificent men into place for their rendezvous with destiny. All along, Beckwith had been impatient with and suspicious of the other services and units involved; in his eyes, they all lacked experience, nerve, and skill. So now, when things began to go sour, Beckwith felt not just disappointment and anger but contempt.

When he found Kyle, he bellowed, "That goddamn number-two helo has been shut down! We only have five good choppers. You've got to talk to Seiffert and see what he says. You talk their language—I don't." Beckwith didn't see mechanical problems with the helicopters; he saw faltering courage in the men who flew them. He said as much to Kyle, grumbling that the pilots were looking for excuses not to go.

The comment burned the Air Force officer, who had been contending with Beckwith for months. He knew better than to argue with him. The chopper captains had the same kind of responsibilities that Beckwith had, and they were responsible for getting their own crews in and out safely. No one knew their machines better than they did, because they literally bet their lives on them every time they flew.

Seiffert had made his decision. One of the hydraulic pumps on McGuire's chopper was shot, and they had no way to fix it. Kyle asked if it would be possible to fly using just the remaining pump, and Seiffert told him emphatically, "No! It's unsafe! If the controls lock up, it becomes uncontrollable. It's grounded!"

When Fitch returned from rounding up the rest of his men, he was surprised to find that his second-in-command, Captain E. K. Smith, was still waiting with his squadron in the dust. He told Smith to get the men on the choppers.

"The mission is an abort," Smith said.

"What do you mean, it's an abort?"

"Colonel Beckwith said it's an abort," Smith said. He explained that McGuire's chopper couldn't fly. This contradicted what Fitch had heard from McGuire—that the chopper was damaged but flyable. Fitch knew his commander was such a hothead that it was entirely possible Beckwith had said something like that knowing only half the story.

The colonel pivoted the moment he heard the crash. He thought with despair of his men: an entire Delta troop, trapped inside the plane. It was an enormous bomb on a short fuse.

"E.K., I'm not doubting your word, but I'm going to see Beckwith about this," he said.

The abort scenario, which they had rehearsed, called for Fitch and his men to board not the helicopters but one of the tankers. The choppers would fly back to the carrier, and the planes would return to Masirah. Fitch told Smith to prepare the men to board the plane, but said they should wait until he returned.

Finding Colonel Beckwith in the noise and swirling dust wasn't easy; one of the things the plan lacked was a clearly defined rallying point, or command center. So it took some wandering, but Fitch eventually found Beckwith, Burruss, Kyle, and the other mission commanders huddled outside one of the C-130s with a secure satellite radio.

"What's going on?" he shouted over the din.

"Well, Seiffert said that helicopter can't fly—that it's not mission capable—and we're down to five," Beckwith said, disgusted.

Kyle and the chopper crews said they were ready to proceed with five helicopters, but that would require trimming the assault force by twenty men. Beckwith refused. "We all

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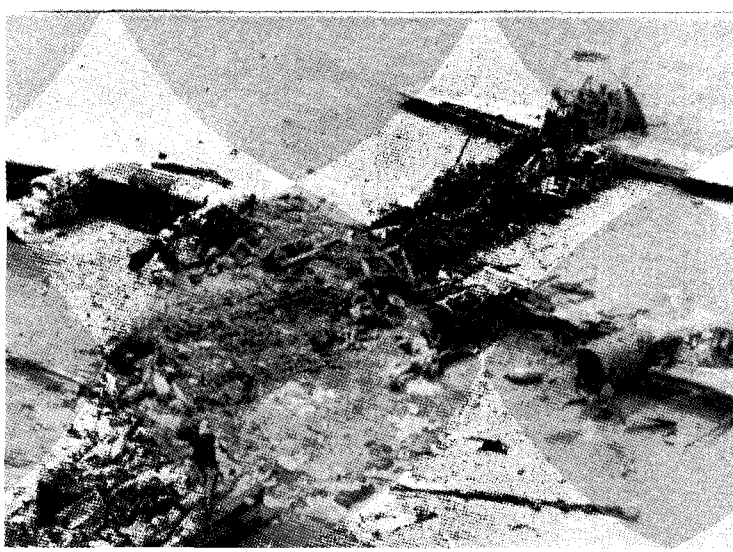
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The wreckage of a Marine helicopter and an Air Force "bladder plane," which collided in the desert

go or nobody goes," he said. The question was passed up the chain to Washington, where Secretary of Defense Harold Brown relayed the situation to Brzezinski in the White House. The national-security adviser, who only minutes earlier had been told that all six choppers were refueling and that the mission was proceeding as planned, was stunned. He quickly assessed what he knew, and engaged in a little wishful thinking. He imagined Beckwith, who had been so gung-ho in his visit to the White House, fuming in the desert, eager to proceed but stymied by more-cautious generals in the rear. So he directed Brown to tell the commanders on the ground that if they were prepared to go ahead with only five choppers, they had White House approval. He then left to find Carter.

In the din of Desert One the mission commanders received Brzezinski's message and reconsidered. It angered Beckwith to even be asked; he felt his judgment and commitment were being questioned. Nevertheless, he said, "Can we make it with fewer aircraft?"

"Sir, we have been through this in rehearsals," Fitch said. "Who are we going to leave behind?"

Some felt that they could trim the package and proceed. Shortly before lifting off on the mission, they had received new and reliable intelligence about the location of the hostages in the embassy compound, which would eliminate the need for some of the searching they had planned to do. Perhaps they could do it with fewer men.

But Beckwith was more cautious. Which men would they leave behind? If they left the interpreters, who would talk them past the roadblocks in the city? If they got five choppers to the hide sites, how likely was it that all five would restart the next day? If one or two failed to start, and another got hit—likely scenarios that had been built into the plan—how were they going to airlift out all the hostages and Beckwith's men? The plan was finely wrought, with such a delicate balance between risk and opportunity that asking Beckwith to omit any piece was too much. It meant shifting the odds too greatly against his men and his beautiful creation, which he was not prepared to do. That was the conclusion the mission planners had reached in advance, after calm, careful deliberation. These automatic-abort scenarios had been predetermined precisely to avoid life-and-death decisions at the last minute. This was clearly an abort situ-

ation. On the mission schedule, just after the line "less than six helos," was the word "ABORT," and it was the only word on the page in capital letters.

"I need every man I've got and every piece of gear," Beckwith said finally. "There's no fat I can cut out."

The decision was relayed to Wadi Kena and to Washington, where Brzezinski broke the news of the setback to Carter. Standing in a corridor between the Oval Office and the president's study, Carter muttered, "Damn. Damn."

He and Brzezinski were soon joined by a larger group of advisers, including Walter Mondale, Hamilton Jordan, Warren Christopher, and Jody Powell. Standing behind his desk, his sleeves rolled up and hands on his hips, the president told them, "I've got some bad news ... I had to abort the rescue mission ... Two of our helicopters never reached Desert One. That left us six. The Delta team was boarding the six helicopters when they found out that one of them had a mechanical problem and couldn't go on."

"What did Beckwith think?" Jordan asked.

Carter explained that they had consulted with Beckwith, and that the decision had been unanimous.

"At least there were no American casualties and no innocent Iranians hurt," Carter said.

ON THE RUNWAY, APRIL 25, 2:00 A.M.

At Desert One there wasn't time to dwell on the abort decision. Fitch directed his men to board one of the fuel planes. They piled in on top of the nearly emptied fuel bladders, which rippled like a giant black water bed. Everyone was weary and disappointed. Delta officer Eric Haney stripped off his gear and his black field jacket, balling it up behind him to form a cushion against the hard metal angles of the plane's inner wall. He and some of the other men wedged their weapons snugly between the bladder and the wall of the plane to keep them secure and out of the way. Some of the men immediately fell asleep.

"We're all set—let's go," Fitch told the plane's crew chief.

Just behind their tanker, a combat controller in goggles, one of Carney's crew, appeared outside the cockpit of Major Schaefer's chopper and informed the pilot that he had to move his aircraft out of the way. Schaefer had refueled behind that tanker, and he now had enough fuel to fly back to the *Nimitz*, but first the C-130s needed to get off the ground.

So Schaefer lifted the front end of his craft. His crew chief hopped out to straighten the nose wheels, which had been bent sideways when they landed. Straightened, they could be retracted so that they wouldn't cause drag in flight. The crew chief climbed back in, and Schaefer lifted the chopper to a hover at about fifteen feet and held it, kicking up an intense storm of dust that whipped around the combat controller on the ground. The combat controller was the only thing Schaefer could see below, a hazy black image in a cloud of brown, so the pilot fixed on him as a point of reference.

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To escape the cloud created by Schaefer's rotors, the combat controller retreated toward the wing of the parked C-130. Concentrating on his own aircraft, Schaefer didn't notice that his blurry reference point on the ground had moved. He kept the nose of his blinded chopper pointed at the man below, and as the combat controller moved, the helicopter turned in the same direction, drifting to a point almost directly above the plane.

"How much power do we have, Les?" Schaefer asked, performing his usual checklist.

"Ninety-four percent," Petty said.

Then Schaefer heard and felt a loud, strong, metallic *whack!* It sounded like someone had hit the side of his aircraft with a large aluminum bat. Others heard a cracking sound as loud as an explosion, but somehow sharper-edged, more piercing and particular, like the shearing impact of giant industrial tools. The Marine pilot's rotors had clipped the top of the plane, metal violently smashing into metal in a wild spray of sparks, and instantly the helicopter lost all aerodynamics, was wrenched forward by the collision, its cushion of air whipped out from beneath, and it fell with a grinding bang into the C-130's cockpit, an impact so stunning that Schaefer briefly blacked out. Both aircraft were carrying a lot of fuel—Schaefer had just filled his tanks, and the C-130 still had fuel in the bladder in its rear. And the sparks from the collision immediately ignited both of them with a powerful, lung-emptying *thump* that seemed to suck all the air out of the desert. A huge blue ball of fire formed around the front of the C-130, and a pillar of white flame

rocketed 300 feet or more into the sky, turning the scene once more from night into day.

Beckwith pivoted the moment he felt and heard the crash, and started running toward it. He pulled up short, a football field away, stopped by the intense heat, and thought with despair of his men: Fitch's entire troop, trapped.

Inside the C-130, Fitch had felt the plane begin to shudder, as though the pilots were revving the engines for takeoff. The hold had no windows, and he couldn't tell if they were moving yet. Then he heard two loud, dull *thunks*. He thought maybe the nose gear or the landing gear had hit a rock, but when he looked toward the front of the aircraft he saw flames and sparks. He thought they were under attack.

He had removed his rucksack, and leaning against it was his weapon, an M203 grenade launcher. He grabbed it and stood, in a single motion. Beside him the plane's load master, responding wordlessly to the same sight, pulled open the troop door on the port side of the plane. It revealed a solid wall of flame. Fitch helped the load master slam the door down and push the handle in to lock it. He and the men were perched on a thousand gallons of fuel, and they appeared to be caught in an inferno.

"Open the ramp!" Fitch shouted, but lowering it revealed more flames. The plane was going to explode. It was an enormous bomb on a short fuse, and the fuse was lit. The only other way out was the starboard troop door, which had been calmly opened by three of the plane's crewmen. That way proved blessedly free of flames. Men started piling out of it before it was completely open.

Still inside, Sergeant Major Dave Cheney, a bull of a man with a big deep voice, kept shouting, "Don't panic! Don't panic!" as the men crowded toward the only escape. Flames were spreading fast along the roof, wrapping down the walls on both sides, and igniting in each man a primitive flight instinct that none of them could control. One of the junior Air Force crewmen fell and was being trampled by fleeing Deltas when Technical Sergeant Ken Bancroft fought his way to the man, picked him up, and carried him to the doorway and out. Cheney's natural authority and clarity helped prevent an utterly mad scramble, and kept the men in a steady flow out the door. They were used to filing out this way on parachute jumps, so the line moved fast. Still, it was torture for the men at the rear.

Ray Doyle, a load master on one of the other tankers, more than a hundred feet away, was knocked over by the force of the initial explosion. Jessie Rowe, a crewman on another tanker, felt his plane shake and the temperature of the air suddenly shoot up. Burruss saw the plane erupt as he stepped off the back of his C-130. He was carrying incendiary explosives down the ramp, to destroy the disabled Sea Stallion, and the sight buckled him. He sat down and watched the tower of flame engulfing the plane, the downed chopper perched on top of it like a giant metal dragonfly, thinking, *Man, Fitch and his whole squadron gone, those poor bastards*. But then he saw men running from the fireball.

Pilots of the other craft quickly spread the word to their crews that they had not been attacked.

Haney was still inside the burning plane, near the end of the line of men trying to get out. He and those around him had been jarred alert by the noise and impact of the crash, and Haney had seen blue sparks overhead toward the front. Then the galley door at the front of the plane blew in, and flames blasted in behind it. "Haul ass!" shouted the man next to him, leaping to his feet.

Captain E. K. Smith, who had dozed off right after boarding the plane, woke up to see men trying to gain their footing on the shifting surface of the fuel bladder and thought it was amusing—until he saw the flames. He and the men around him scrambled toward the door as best they could, fearing they would never outrace the flames. Ahead, men were jammed in the doorway. When Haney finally reached the door, he threw himself out, dropping down hard on the man who had jumped before him. They picked themselves up and ran until they were about fifty yards away. Then they turned to watch with horror.

Fitch felt it was his duty to stay in the plane until all the men were off, but it was hard. As the flames rapidly advanced, he realized that not everyone was going to make it. Instinct finally won out, and both he and Cheney leaped out the door, falling when they hit the ground. Other men crashed on top of them. They helped one another up and over to where the others were now watching, brightly illuminated by the growing fire.

Fitch ran to what seemed a safe distance and then turned around, still assuming they were under attack, and lifted his weapon. He looked for the enemy and saw instead the awesome and ugly sight: the chopper, its rotors still turning, had clearly crashed down on the front of the plane. It wasn't an attack; it was an accident.

He saw two more men jump out—one of them Staff Sergeant Joe Beyers, the plane's radio operator, whose flight suit was burning. Other men rushed to put out the flames and drag him clear. Then ammunition started "cooking off," all the grenades, missiles, explosives, and rifle rounds on both aircraft, causing loud, cracking explosions and throwing flames and light. The Redeye missiles went off, drawing smoke trails high into the sky. Finally the fuel bladders ignited, sending a huge pillar of flame skyward in a loud explosion that buckled the fuselage. All four propellers dropped straight down into the sand and stuck there, as if somebody had planted them.

In the chopper, Schaefer at last came to. He was sitting crooked in his seat, the chopper was listing to one side, and flames engulfed the cockpit.

"What's wrong, Les, what's wrong?" he asked, turning to his co-pilot. But Petty was already gone. He had jumped out the window on his side.

Schaefer shut down the engines and sat for a moment, certain he was about to die. Then, for some reason, an image came into his mind of his fiancée's father—who had never seemed much impressed by his future son-in-law—commenting a few days hence on how the poor sap had been found roasted like a holiday turkey in the front seat of his aircraft. Something about that horrifying image motivated him. His body would

not be found like a blackened Butterball; he had to at least try to escape. He ejected the window on his side, and as fire closed over him, badly burning his face, he dropped hard to the ground and then ran from the erupting wreckage.

The exploding aircraft and ammo sent flaming bits of hot metal and debris spraying across the makeshift airport, riddling the four remaining working helicopters, whose crews jumped out and moved to a safe distance. Most of the men had no idea what was going on; they knew only that a plane and a chopper had been destroyed. The air over the scene was heavy with the odor of fuel, so it wasn't hard to imagine that all the other aircraft might burst into flames as well. The remaining C-130s began taxiing in different directions away from the conflagration.

Word of the calamity reached the command center in Wadi Kena in a hurried report: "We have a crash. A helo crashed into one of the C-130s. We have some dead, some wounded, and some trapped. The crash site is ablaze; ammunition is cooking off."

The only course now was to clear out, and fast. Some thought was given to retrieving the bodies of the dead, but the fire was raging, and there wasn't time. Reached by radio at Wadi Kena, Major General James Vaught, the mission's overall commander, instructed Burruss to turn loose the Iranian bus passengers. The Delta officer ordered one of his men to disable the bus by ripping some wires from its engine.

As Burruss headed back to his C-130, he took one last look at the flaming ruins of the plane and the chopper and felt a stab of remorse over leaving the dead behind. But nothing could be done about it.

WASHINGTON, D.C., APRIL 24, 6:00 P.M.

Word of the catastrophe reached the White House just before the force left the ground in retreat. The president was in his study, surrounded by his advisers, still absorbing the shock of the abort decision. He received a call from General Jones.

"Yes, Dave."

Jordan watched the president close his eyes, and then Carter's jaw fell and his face went pale.

"Are there any dead?" Carter asked.

The room was silent. Finally the president said softly, "I understand," and hung up the phone.

He calmly explained to the others what had happened. The men took in the awful news quietly. Then Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, who had submitted his resignation earlier that day because he objected to the mission, said, "Mr. President, I'm very, very sorry."

Jordan ducked into the president's bathroom and vomited.

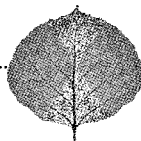
America's elite rescue force had lost eight men, seven helicopters, and a C-130, and had not even made contact with the enemy. It was a debacle. It defined the word "debacle." ■

.....
An interactive version of Mark Bowden's rescue-mission article can be found at iran.theatlantic.com. More information about his forthcoming book can be found at www.theguestsoftheayatollah.com.

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COLONEL CROSS OF THE GURKHAS

In the mountains of strife-torn Nepal, some lessons about modern warfare from a British throwback

BY ROBERT D. KAPLAN

.....

The town of Pokhara, a half hour by plane west of Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, lies in a dank and humid valley beneath the glittering snows and granite of the Annapurna range of the Himalayas. When I visited recently, in the company of a U.S. Army major, the town was wreathed in monsoon clouds. Water buffaloes meandered alongside black, mildewed walls that were almost completely covered with moss and further obscured by dripping banana leaves. Government paramilitaries in blue camouflage uniforms sleepily guarded their installations. In another era we could have arrived by bus or car, but Nepal today is torn by a Maoist insurrection, and the territory between Kathmandu and Pokhara is controlled or threatened by rebels. Pokhara was considered secure, but its atmosphere conjured collapse.

The U.S. Army major, who did not wish to be identified, is with the American team trying to help the beleaguered Nepalese monarchy in its campaign against the Maoists, and he and I had traveled to Pokhara to meet a military legend: the retired British army colonel John Philip Cross. Eighty years old, Cross greeted us outside his compound wearing a topi, dark glasses, a smart cravat, pressed shorts, and high woolen socks pulled up nearly to his knees. Those knees, I noticed, were tanned and powerful. He has covered 10,000 miles on foot through the Nepalese hills over the years, and still hikes twelve miles

a day. Cross enlisted on April 2, 1943. On June 8, 1944—"D-Day plus two"—he boarded a troop ship for Bombay. Except for short visits to England he has lived in Asia ever since.

His first memorable experience in the army was a briefing on sex from a medical officer, which frankly shocked him. Without a trace of a smile the officer had said, "Don't forget: a woman for children, a boy for pleasure, but for real ecstasy, a goat." At the tail end of World War II, Colonel Cross was assigned to the 1st Battalion of the 1st Gurkha Rifles, based at Dharamsala, and thus commenced his life's work as a leader of Gurkhas. From there it was on to Burma to fight and disarm Japanese soldiers; to Cochinchina (Vietnam) to fight the Viet Minh; and to Laos, where, as the last British defense attaché before the fall of the monarchy, Cross became the de facto eyes and ears of the U.S. embassy, tracking the Communist Pathet Lao (the British ambassador, he says with a sneer, "was a fellow-traveler"). Next he went to western Nepal to become a recruiting officer for the Gurkhas. Future years would find him parachuting into Borneo to fight a Communist insurgency, and training Americans in jungle warfare in the Malay Peninsula. "A certain BBC reporter, God rot his soul, accused me of teaching torture," Cross recalls. All in all he

has spent a total of ten years in the jungle, often carrying the equivalent of his own weight on his back, which he terms "a delightful way of life." He speaks French and nine Asian languages.

Robert D. Kaplan is a national correspondent for The Atlantic and the author of Imperial Grunts: The American Military on the Ground.



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Larry Burns

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Cross is a confirmed bachelor because of “hot blood and cold feet,” he explains. His library of battered books, medals, and kukri knives, each object charged by a memory, is decayed by heat and humidity, for he has no air-conditioning. He sleeps on a spartan bed in the next room.

Now, writing books on irregular warfare and Himalayan history that deserve to be read even though they aren’t, he is a minor and very eccentric offshoot of a British imperial species that reached perfection in the person of the former soldier and literary travel writer Patrick Leigh Fermor, whom I interviewed in Greece in 2002. Both are inveterate walkers: Fermor across Europe, Cross across Nepal.

One cannot think about Nepalese fighting men—whether the Royal Nepalese Army, which is the government force, or the Maoist rebels—without thinking about the fierce and fabled Gurkhas. Throughout my travels with the U.S. military I ruminated on the American effort to raise indigenous troops and use them to project power. The story of the Gurkhas shows that the British were past masters at this.

The term “Gurkha” comes from a British mispronunciation of the town of Gorkha, in western Nepal, where the first units of these warriors were initially raised among Gurungs and Magars, Nepalese tribes of Mongolian origin. Not a true ethnic group, the Gurkhas represent what British officers since the mid-eighteenth century have considered the fighting classes of Nepal. The British first encountered them during the 1814–1816 war between Nepal and the Bengal Presidency of the East India Company. Impressed by their cheerful disposition even when wounded, the British bonded with their erstwhile adversaries. The relationship was solidified during the Indian Mutiny of 1857, when Gurkha recruits to the Indian army declined to revolt and in fact came to the aid of British civilians.

Afterward the Gurkhas fought for the British on India’s North West and North East Frontiers, in China during the Boxer Rebellion, in Mesopotamia and elsewhere during World War I, and throughout the globe during World War II. The British army used Gurkhas in the Falklands and the Balkans, and has used them in Iraq. They have served as UN peacekeepers in many places. Gurkha enlistees in the British military tend to come not only from the same tribes but from the same clans and families. In the 1970s forty-six sets of brothers were serving at the same time in a single battalion—the 6th Queen Elizabeth’s Own Gurkha Rifles. Plying a profession at times unfairly sullied, the Gurkhas have been Great Britain’s most valued mercenaries, in both imperial and post-imperial British history. A. E. Housman wrote,

Their shoulders held the sky suspended;
They stood, and earth’s foundations stay;
What God abandoned, these defended,
And saved the sum of things for pay.

“The toughness of Gurkha skulls is legendary,” writes the historian Byron Farwell. In 1931, on the North West Frontier, when a mess mule kicked a Gurkha havildar in the head with

his iron-shod hooves, “the havildar complained of a headache and that evening wore a piece of sticking plaster on his forehead,” according to Farwell. “The mule went lame.”

I found the old Gurkhas a haunting presence, because they were sharpened, refined, exaggerated forms of the Marines and soldiers I had been befriending and describing in previous travels. There was something indisputably antique about these gentlemen warriors, who told me their life stories under a black-and-white photograph of Queen Elizabeth II. To call them Kiplingesque would be to cheapen them; they were practically out of the *Iliad*.

Balbasdar Basnet, a retired corporal in his seventies, was the most memorable of them. He had joined the Gurkha Rifles of the British army when he was sixteen. His shriveled, nut-brown face was capped by a topi. He had teeth on the right side of his mouth only, and his raspy voice fought against time.

Balbasdar was from a village so impoverished that he’d never tasted tea before joining the army. After basic training he served for eight months on the North West Frontier, guarding the border against “Pathans” (he used the nineteenth-century British term for what today we call Pushtuns). From there he went to Bombay, and then by ship to northwest Malaya for three months of jungle training, just as World War II was gathering force. Finally he fought the Japanese in close combat.

“Were you scared?” I asked.

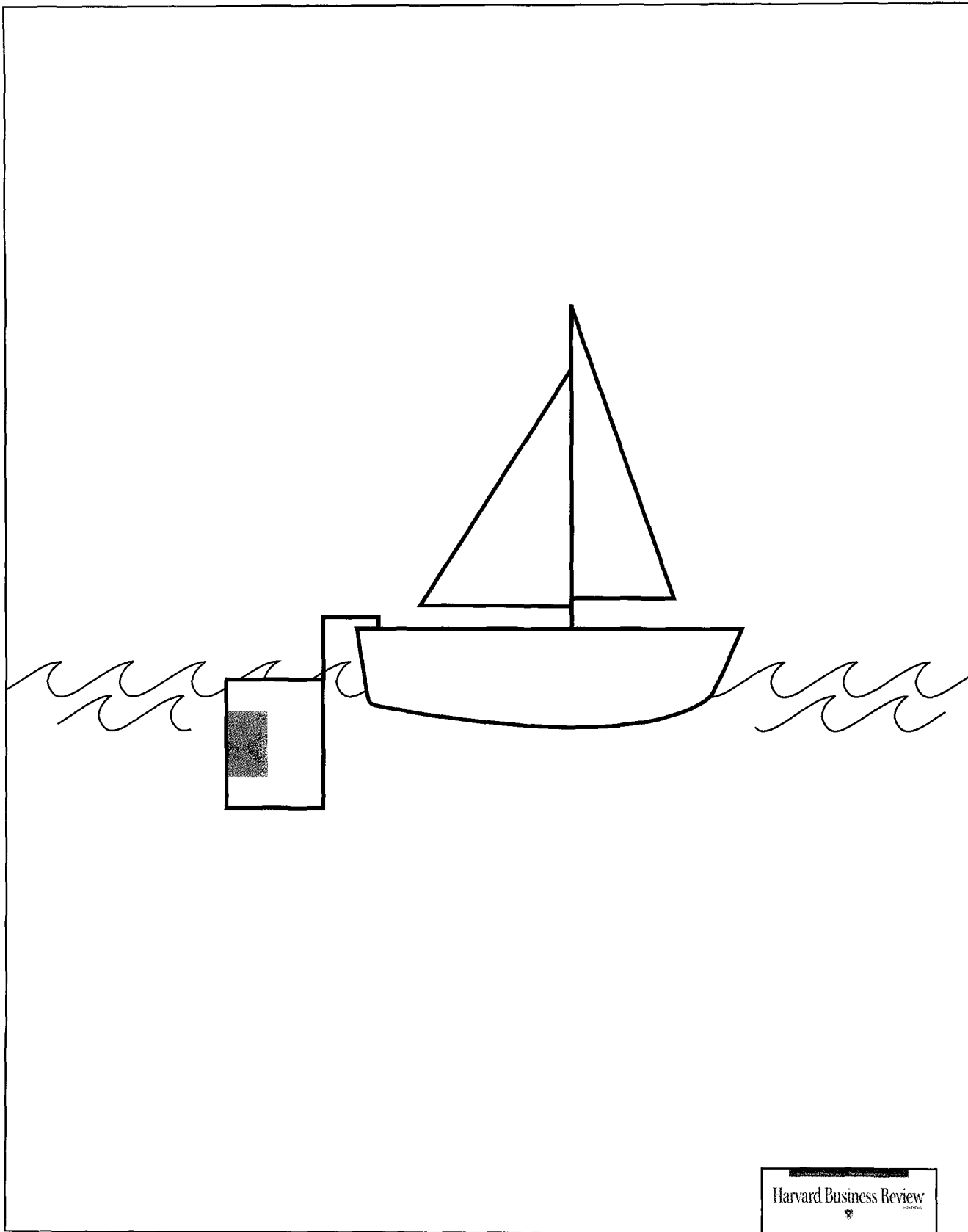
“No, I was thinking only to do and die.” He actually said that.

For fifteen days he and other Gurkhas marched in the jungle, retreating from a much larger force of Japanese. He was taken prisoner early in the war, and for four years subsisted on beatings and 200 grams of rice a day, moving around among labor camps in Malaya, Java, Sumatra, and New Guinea, wearing nothing more than a loincloth. Hiroshima liberated him from his sufferings, he told me. Suddenly he was being fed and clothed, and a few weeks later New Zealand troops arrived to formally liberate him. Proud to have served Her Majesty, he told me.

This was no twenty-first-century Western mentality. Though many Marine and Army grunts make a good attempt at approaching the Gurkha corporal’s standard, the fact is that we are a softer, more complaining, less fatalistic society than the one the Gurkhas represent, and morally the better for it. But that is not without its disadvantages when confronting terrorists who have a very accommodating attitude toward their own violent death.

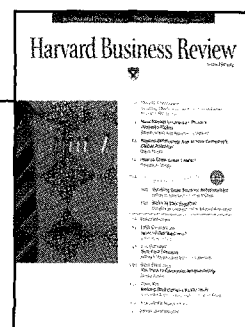
“Late-nineteenth-century warfare never stopped,” Colonel Cross told me, “though it was masked for a time by the Cold War emphasis on atomic bombs. And in this type of warfare that you Americans must master, only two things count: the mystic dimension of service and the sanctity of an oath. It’s about the giving of one’s best when the audience is of the smallest.

“Now take your Gurkha,” he went on, motioning toward Buddhiman Gurung, his beloved adopted son, who has been with him for twenty-eight years, and whose family the colonel has also adopted. “He’s a hungry peasant with



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a knife who is out for the main chance. There are none finer. I placed these western hillsmen in the Singapore police, and they never failed me. The Mongoloid doesn't die easily. Plainsmen will never defeat such people in hill battles without field artillery. Clausewitz said as much."

This was all bad news for the Royal Nepalese Army, I thought, though Colonel Cross was careful not to make explicit political statements, given his circumstances: the Maoists are in the hills nearby, and government forces are down the street. The fact is that the Maoists come from the same sturdy hill tribes that Cross recruited for decades, while many of the RNA's forces are softer plainsmen and can't employ artillery, because even a handful of civilian casualties would ignite protests from the international community. Moreover,

the Maoists are fortified by "the mystic dimension of service and the sanctity of an oath," whereas RNA recruits—aside from some specialized units—join for a salary and a career.

Of course, Colonel Cross is a throwback. His outlook and manner of expression can be brutal, almost perverse. He is living in a threatened backwater of the only country he can call his own. Still, there was a certain cruel logic in his pronouncements.

"It's not about sugarcoated bullets and dispensing condoms in PXes," he said. "You can't fight properly until you know that you are going to die anyway. That's extreme, but that's the gold standard. You don't join the army to wipe your enemy's ass. You join to kill, or for you yourself to be killed, and above all to have a good sense of humor about it." ▀

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Swing with everything
You've got. Sock it and admire
The arc. This is what

The game is about.
This is the house my clouts built.
Here comes another

Mammoth rip, here comes
My patented thunderclap.
This is the way to

Make the old game grand
Again, going deep in the
Packed house my clouts built.

Here comes Colossus,
Batting clean-up. There goes a
Moon shot, upper deck.

This is the power
They write home about. This is
The house my clouts built.

Swing for the fences,
Bunyanesque. Everyone loves
A majestic blast

That defies the laws
Of matter and space, the stuff
That myths are made of.

This is the sweet spot
That runs with the grain, the snap
In the wrists that makes

The old lumber ring,
The leonine reflexes
In an ursine frame

That packs the punch that
Wins the crown for the home team
That's built around me.

Swing as if this swing
Will be your last. Even my
Whiffs are feats of strength.

This is the press box,
Where the scribes wax Homeric,
This is the bull pen,

Where the aces sweat
Bullets. This is my playhouse:
My wallops built it.

Where is it written
You have to grow up? Make way
For the manchild,

All brawn and pinstripes,
That mugs for the shutterbugs
That feast on the swats

That put the fannies
In the seats. Ladies and gents,
Hold on to your hats—

This is my sandbox,
My ball yard, my turf. This is
The house my clouts built.

—DAVID BARBER

David Barber is The Atlantic's poetry editor. His new book, Wonder Cabinet, will be published this spring.

TELEPHONE SURVEILLANCE PERMISSION FORM

BY BRUCE MCCALL

National Security Agency

Form: NSA-89724 C/CC

Note: Your telephone may be tapped in the course of conducting official surveillance business. If you hear clicking, hang up immediately and call your lawyer.*

*Only if your lawyer's telephone is NOT being tapped.

CAUTION!

Talking dirty in an Arab accent to a girl on a phone-sex line is entrapment, not eavesdropping. Check here if you wish to bill your per-minute charges to the Entrapment budget. ☐

1. Telephone surveillance of (area code) _____ (number) _____ is necessary for national security because **CHECK ONE:**

- ☐ Same area code as "Best of Cat Stevens" mail-order record outlet
- ☐ Number corresponds to Baghdad street address of ex-supplier of Dr. Scholl's to elite Republican Guard
- ☐ Aligns with President's "No Phone Left Untapped" initiative
- ☐ Can't be too careful these days

1-A. Subject name: (If name unknown, write in "Jim" or "Akbar")

2. Attorney General's Know-Your-Constitutional-Law Quiz

TRUE or FALSE: The President of the United States, in time of war, may:

- _____ Drive in the bus lane; _____ Invade; _____ Skip regular colonoscopies;
- _____ Bomb; _____ Place prank late-night calls to General (Ret.) Colin Powell;
- _____ Detain; _____ Chainsaw White House shrubbery; _____ Deny.

3. Restricted Surveillance Subjects: **DO NOT CALL, DO NOT ASK**

1. Veep-Halliburton private line; 2. A.A. Hotline; 3. Posts 1 through 34 of U.S. Veterans of Abu Ghraib; 4. Abramoff Dry Cleaning & Martinizing, Pah-Ute branch; 5. Tonton Macoute Security Consultants; 6. Rove & Accomplices, Locksmiths; 7. Interviews Unlimited, Cairo-Bucharest-Kosovo (unlisted).

4. Sample Telephonic Surveillance Evidence **NOT** accepted by the U.S.A.G.

"Bombs will be aboard the plane by 9 p.m. Sunday. Allah be praised!"

—Disregard. Undoubtedly refers to "bombe," an ice cream dessert treat. A caterer has clearly brought some of his bombes to be served on the First Class menu of an upcoming flight of Allah—obviously a regional Mideast airline—and is manifestly most thankful for this opportunity to sell his treats ...

KEY WORDS

What are key words? Key words are the key words likeliest to tip off non-Sunday School (a.k.a. foreign world extremist provocateur) plots, as verified by Fundamentalist Morality in Espionage and Terror, the vigilante watchdog patriot crusade think tank. **Telephonic eavesdroppers:** Memorize both key words and not key words:

Key Words

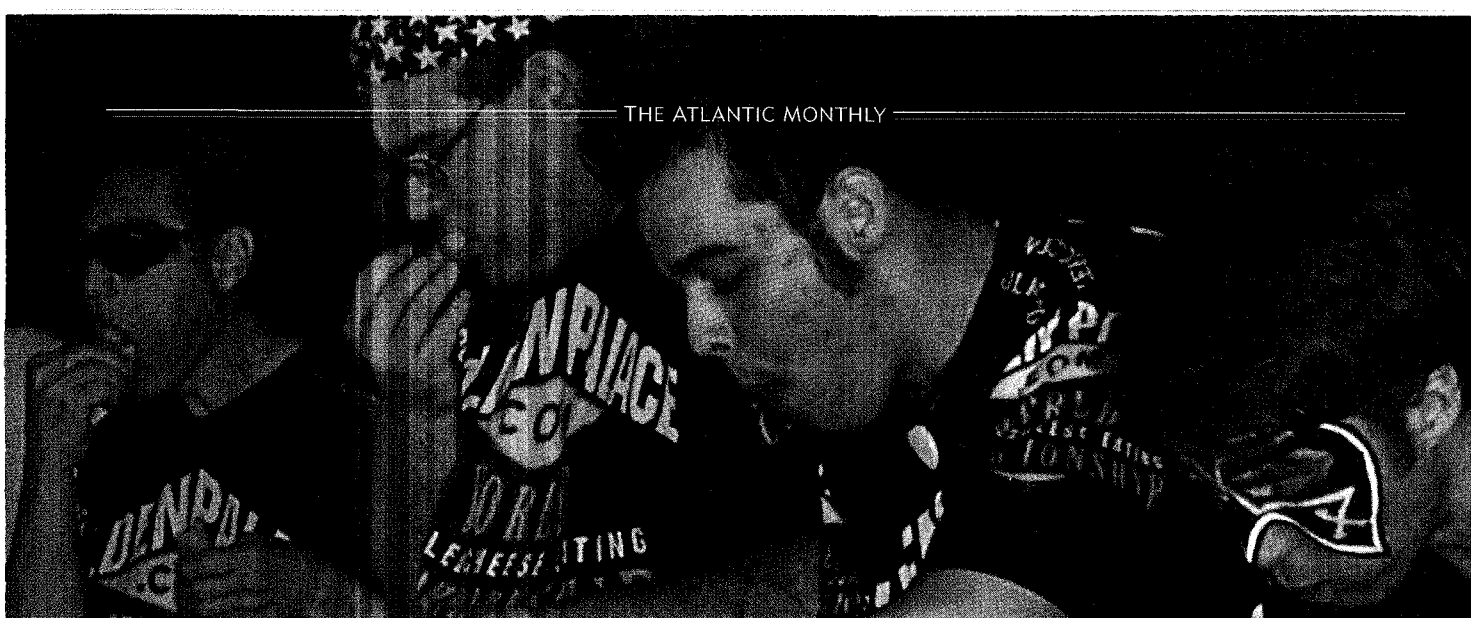
Fluoridation / Negro / Ballet
MTV / Lingerie / Darwin / U.N.

Not Key Words

Jihad / Fatwah / Suicide / Death
42 virgins / Bloodbath / Assassinate

First telephonic eavesdropper to monitor 1,000 calls gets to put one individual of his/her choosing on the top-security-risk blacklist, no questions asked.





HORSEMEN OF THE ESOPHAGUS

Among the super-gluttons, on the front lines of competitive eating

BY JASON FAGONE

....

Ten years ago the image of the Virgin Mary appeared on a grilled-cheese sandwich in the frying pan of Diana Duyser, a Florida jewelry designer. Now She is here, in Venice Beach, to preside over the World Grilled Cheese Eating Championship.

She has picked a fine day to grace southern California with Her presence. The sun is shining, the sky is blue. Gulls loop above the boardwalk in jazzy little arcs. The February air is warm, but She is packed inside a plastic box and surrounded by cotton balls, for protection.

In fifteen minutes the championship will be decided. It's an eating contest. Whoever eats the most grilled-cheese sandwiches in ten minutes wins \$3,500. The prize pot has attracted some of the world's top competitors—people who eat under the banner of the International Federation of Competitive Eating, or IFOCE. They consider themselves professional athletes. Guys like Eric “Badlands” Booker, a 420-pound subway conductor, rapper, and world champion in the doughnut, corned-beef-hash, and cheesecake disciplines. “Hungry” Charles Hardy, who just half an hour ago had his right biceps tattooed with the initials IFOCE. Ed “Cookie” Jarvis, a Long Island real-estate agent who embroiders his numerous eating titles onto a gargantuan flowing robe with his portrait airbrushed on the front, flanked by a lighting bolt. Rich and Carlene LeFevre, the First Couple of competitive eating—a pair of sweetly manic retirees from the outskirts of Las Vegas. Carlene is a consistent top-five finisher, and Rich, nicknamed the Locust, holds records in Spam (six pounds in twelve minutes), chili (one and a half gallons in ten minutes), and corny dogs (eighteen and a half in ten minutes).

Jason Fagone is a writer at large for Philadelphia. This article is drawn from his forthcoming Horsemen of the Esophagus: Competitive Eating and the Big Fat American Dream (Crown).

America's greatest eater is also here. Sonya Thomas. Five foot five, 103 pounds. She calls herself the Black Widow, because she gleefully devours the males. Her eating titles are so numerous that promoters list them alphabetically: asparagus, baked beans, chicken nuggets, chicken wings, eggs, fruitcake, giant burger, hamburger, jambalaya, Maine lobster, meatballs, oysters, pulled pork, quesadilla, sweet-potato casserole, tacos, toasted ravioli, Turducken ...

“BROTHERS AND SISTERS!”

It's starting.

“There are moments in our days when we are suddenly LOST.”

Conversations stop. One hundred and fifty curious heads swivel toward a man onstage in a dark blazer and a straw boater hat. This is the contest emcee: George Shea, chairman of the IFOCE, which bills itself as “the governing body of all stomach-centric sport.” His hands, clasped together over his crotch, hold a microphone. He looks down and widens his stance dramatically as the opening lament of Moby's “Natural Blues” emerges from the PA system.

“We hum along, doing the million things that Americans do, and then suddenly we are STRUCK—”

A woman, excited, screams.

“—and we wonder why. There is no trigger. There is no reason. And yet there it is. Sadness. Isolation. Loss. Why?”

Shea pauses, then answers his question.

“Because the PURSUITS of our lives have OBSCURED our lives, ladies and gentlemen. It is not only the hustle and bustle, the cars and the kids, the debts and the acquisitions—it is something more.”



The World Grilled Cheese Eating Championships, Feb. 1, 2006

At other times Shea has referred to competitive eating as the country's "fastest-growing sport," and he likes to say, tongue two-thirds in cheek, that eating has surpassed hockey and badminton and is now No. 5 in America's heart, after baseball, basketball, football, and golf. Today's contest is just one of a hundred scheduled for 2005, up from about seventy in 2004. Prize pots surge, TV deals dangle ...

"We cannot SEE!" Shea is saying. "We cannot HEAR! We cannot THINK! And that is why ... She has come! Amid no fanfare whatsoever! A woman! Grilling a cheese sandwich!"

The music shifts to a gentle adult-contemporary track. Shea bleeds all aggression from his voice.

"Ladies and gentlemen. It is said that pearls are the precipitate of sunlight, slowed and bent by the ocean until it forms a nugget of beauty inside the lowly mollusk. And likewise, this grilled-cheese sandwich is the precipitate of the divine spirit"—here the music shifts again, to a minor-key vamp, and Shea's voice skews deep and dark—"captured here on earth in the most unlikely of places, delivered to us in the image of the Virgin Mary!"

Shea has sensitive features, an aristocratic nose, and neat black hair. He's good-looking, compact. Perfect posture. His voice is melodious but powerful—precise, all syllables enunciated, with the pitch control of a cabaret singer and the gestural excess of a dinner-theater Hamlet.

"It is the bane of our species," he says, "that we are warped most when we know it the least, ladies and gentlemen. It is time to put aside the pursuits that push us through our day, because this change is here today as an athletic and religious experience. TODAY WE HOLD THE GOLDEN PALACE-DOT-COM WORLD GRILLED CHEESE EATING CHAMPIONSHIP! An all-you-can-eat contest that will stand as an homage, as a recognition, a dramatic illustration of the message delivered [to] us by the Virgin Mary Grilled-Cheese Sandwich!"

The music softens. Shea ushers onstage the representative of GoldenPalace.com, Steve Baker. In November 2004, Baker bought the sandwich for \$28,000 on eBay, hoping to

use it for promotional stunts like this one. Wearing a grubby sweatshirt, jeans, and two-day stubble, Baker raises the Virgin Mary Grilled Cheese above his head and proclaims, "The Passion of the Toast lives!"

Baker steps down into the crowd, now a sea of limbs holding digital cameras and angling for a keepsake shot. He parades the sandwich, which Shea calls "the culinary version of the Shroud of Turin," into the throng, and then places it on an easel at the side of the stage to make way for the eaters.

There was a time—two years and fifteen pounds ago—when I didn't watch people gorge themselves in public. Then, one day in the summer of 2004, I came across the IFOCE Web site.

The outer rim of the doughnut hole.

Across the top of the home page, a banner spelled out INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF COMPETITIVE EATING. The site's design was unremarkable except for an illustration on the page's upper left: a heraldic seal with two facing lions. Upon closer inspection, the lions turned out to be eating a single hot dog from different ends while pawing tubes of mustard and ketchup that crossed, like swords, to form an X. A Latin inscription read *In Voro Veritas*.

In Gorging Truth.

I clicked on "Media Inquiries."

Within a day or two I got a call back from Rich Shea, the younger brother of George Shea. Rich talked quickly and thought quickly. He explained that he and his brother maintained a public-relations firm in New York—Shea Communications—and that their bread-and-butter clients were legitimate types like detectives and commercial real-estate managers. The federation was a separate track of the business, run from the same loft office in Chelsea. The Sheas got into the eating game in the late 1980s, when George graduated from college and went to work in New York City for two old-school PR guys from the era when PR guys were called "press agents." These two guys were the ones who invented the biggest eating contest in the world—the Nathan's Famous Fourth of July International Hot Dog Eating Contest—back

in the 1970s. Rich Shea joined George in New York, and the brothers eventually took over the Nathan's account and formed the federation in 1997, with the goal of transforming that single hot-dog contest into an empire of gluttony.

And they were making progress. The federation claimed to have 300 active eater-members. Rich said that by the end of 2004 the federation would sanction anywhere from three to ten contests per month. This was in addition to a handful of non-federation contests that came in two flavors: indie and bootleg. The indie contests—one or two per month—were organized under the umbrella of an offshoot league called the Association of Independent Competitive Eaters, or AICE. Because AICE was newer, its contests were far smaller than the IFOCE's. As for the bootleg contests, they were harder to characterize: dozens, maybe hundreds, of minor spectacles at low-rent venues—crummy bars, small-town carnivals, drive-time radio stations.

Eaters had options, but there was a catch. They couldn't mix and match. The federation required its top talent to sign exclusive eighteen-month management contracts, and it had not been reluctant to shoot off cease-and-desist letters to wayward eaters it suspected of breaching the contract.

If anti-American zealots anywhere in the world wanted to perform a minstrel show of our culture, this is what they'd come up with. Competitive eating is a symbolic hair ball coughed up by the American id.

Ambitious eaters—those who desired the imprimatur of a league—were therefore forced to pick either AICE or the federation. Most eaters went with the federation, because it was bigger in every way: the stage, the money, the media. Federation contests were sponsored by food companies, mostly, but also by municipal festivals and casinos on Indian reservations. The Sheas earned a per-contest fee from each sponsor, usually in the mid four figures to low five figures. The sponsors also put up the prize money, which Rich described as “a thousand dollars here, a thousand dollars there.” In 2004 the total cash prize money was more than \$60,000—of which the top American eater, Sonya Thomas, took home at least \$17,000, plus a car—but the prizes, the number of contests, and the fan base were all growing; in 2005, sponsors would dole out more than \$160,000, and Sonya would double her cash winnings. The Shea brothers had successfully targeted what Rich called “that *guy* demo,” landing the horny eighteen-to-thirty-four set that loves *Maxim* and *FHM*. Capturing the guy demographic allowed them to pitch eating specials to the Travel Channel, the Food Network, the Discovery Channel, and even bigger fish like Fox and ESPN. In 2004, ESPN scored 765,000 household viewers for its first live broadcast of the Nathan's contest.

Eventually, said Rich, he and his brother hoped to convert eating from a hobby into a professional sport, like bass fishing. “That's sort of the curve we're looking at,” Rich said.

He didn't mention it, but in 2001 the bass-fishing league was sold to ESPN for a purported \$35 million.

Critics of the federation are easy to find, having left a trail of acerbic, disapproving quotes in thousands of wire stories about competitive eating. Food historians like Barbara Haber (“It's the fall of Rome, my dear”) and physicians like Harvard Medical School's George Blackburn (“This is sick, abnormal behavior”) have lined up to take a whack, as have foreign critics such as the English newspaper *The Guardian*, which, in the same 2002 article that quoted Blackburn, called competitive eating “a sport for our degraded times.” In 2003, Ralph Nader sounded the alarm about four “signs of societal decay”: three involved corporate greed and congressional gerrymandering, and the fourth was competitive eating. George Shea responded to Nader by talking up the federation's “Turducken” contest, which he called “the first real advancement in Thanksgiving since the Indians sat down with the Pilgrims.” Shea's counterattacks tend to mix deadpan charm and gentle mockery. “A lot of people have had trouble,” he told me when I asked if it was wise to promote gluttony in one of the fatter nations on earth, “separating this superficial visual of people stuffing their faces with large quantities of food with the stereotype of the Ugly American. That is not where I am. I see beauty. I see physical poetry.”

Poetry, exactly. Shea's eating contests are poetic in their blatancy, their brazen mixture of every American trait that seems to terrify the rest of the planet: our hunger for natural resources that may melt the ice caps and flood Europe, our hunger for cheap thrills that turns Muslim swing voters into car bombers. If anti-American zealots anywhere in the world wanted to perform a minstrel show of our culture, this is what they'd come up with. Competitive eating is a symbolic hair ball coughed up by the American id. It is meaningful like a tumor is meaningful. It seems to have a purpose, a message, and its message is this: Look upon our gurgitators, ye Mighty, and despair. Behold these new super-gluttons, these ambassadors of the American appetite, these Horsemen of the Esophagus.

One by one the grilled-cheese eaters take their places at a long table. The top eaters merit a sobriquet or a simple recitation of their feats: Carlene LeFevre becomes “the Martha Stewart of mastication”; the Spam record of husband Rich is heralded, to oohs and aahs; Jed “Jalapeño” Donahue is announced as having eaten 152 of his namesake peppers. The great Sonya Thomas is described as “a cross between Anna Kournikova, Billie Jean King, and a jackal wild on the Serengeti.” Other accomplished eaters include Long Island's Don “Moses” Lerman, the Zen master of raw butter, matzo balls, and baked beans; and Frank Wach, a Chicagoan and “a rookie out of the toasted-ravioli circuit.” The best introductions accompany the least-accomplished eaters, because they are blank slates, allowing

Shea to concoct mythic pasts. To the strains of “Gangsta’s Paradise,” Shea tells the story of a fresh-faced guy named Matt Simpson, who recently ate two rolls of unleavened bread. “It raised in his stomach,” Shea says, “and created an enormous amount of pressure. And he fell to the ground writhing in what appeared to be pain. But when his family came to his side and knelt over him, they realized it was ecstasy: *I feel good, for the first time in my life*. And his father ... said, ‘Go, my son, and join the IFOCE. Join the eaters.’ And so he did, ladies and gentlemen. Twenty-eight years of age, Maaaaatt Simpsonnnnnnnnnnn!!!”

The swelling crowd—maybe 200 to 250 people now—applauds and cheers. They’re primed. So are the eaters. Minutes ago the GoldenPalace.com guy unloaded a giant tray of sandwiches from his truck. The eaters gathered around, inspecting the material.

“I hope they’re greasy,” Carlene LeFevre said. “They’ll just slide right down.”

Eating contests weren’t invented by the Shea brothers or their mentors, or even by Americans. Anthropological studies and old copies of scurrilous newspapers suggest that the will to gorge is universal. Speed and volume competitions pop up in Greek myth, in Norse epics, and even in what may be the first novel, *The Golden Ass*, written in Latin in the second century A.D.: “Last night at supper I was challenged to an eating race by some people at my table and tried to swallow too large a mouthful of polenta cheese.” (Choking ensued.) Ethnographies show that eating contests were regular events at lavish Native American potlatch feasts, and there’s historical evidence of rice contests in Japan, beefsteak contests in Britain, mango contests in India. Even today the French still gorge themselves on cheese at seasonal festivals.

But we’re different. We do it bigger. We have more contests, in more places, and we make no apologies. We unabashedly marry the public-gorging impulse to our most sacred American rituals: the catching of the greased pig followed by the pie-eating contest followed by the reading of the Declaration of Independence on the Fourth of July.

I began phoning competitive eaters in September 2004, starting with veterans like Charles Hardy and Ed Jarvis and Don Lerman. They all said they were amazed by eating’s trajectory, its quick-rising legitimacy.

“We did all the footwork years ago,” Hardy told me. “Traveling here, traveling there. We didn’t really make no kinda money. We pretty much took it to where it is today.” But because of the uptick in prize pots, he said, “the life has been a lot better, eating on the circuit.”

Jarvis said, “Let’s face it: we’re on ESPN. If that’s not professional sports, I don’t know what is.”

Lerman said, “I think in three years it’ll be as big as PGA golf. In five years it may be in the Olympics.”

There were definite hints of pride and obsession in those early calls. Ed told me he maintained a trophy room. “It’s like a shrine,” he said. “I mean, people look in and they’re like: ‘God.’”



George Shea and the grilled-cheese-eating championship belt

Don has a trophy room too. And a weight problem. “Since I’m thirty I’ve been fighting obesity,” he said.

Ed, pushing 400 pounds, was also trying to lose weight. The day I talked to him, he was pondering an upcoming cannoli contest. He was the cannoli champ but was thinking about not defending his title. “It’s rough on the body,” he said. “One, you’re eating eleven thousand calories. Two, there’s no money. Three, all that said, the bottom line is: What am I doing this for? I’m basically putting eleven thousand calories into my body with the chance I could get hurt. What for? There’s gotta be a cause.”

Insecurity, rivalry, hubris, recklessness—that was half of the story, the exact half you’d expect to find in a group of pro gluttons. But the more eaters I called, and the more I pushed past their immediate need to impress upon me that they weren’t a bunch of freaks, the more I saw that, with a few conspicuous exceptions, they weren’t lifelong publicity hounds or career eccentrics. They had wives (or husbands) and kids. They had jobs as construction workers, social workers, bankers, engineers, lawyers. I would come to know them as genuinely sweet and generous, most of them. Except for their collective waist size, they were as averagely American as the Americans in campaign commercials. They had to know that competitive eating was a marketing ploy, and yet—out of some psychic contortion I could only guess at—they rarely spoke of it that way. Eating wasn’t a ploy to them. It was fun. It was a chance to compete, to travel the country and make a little money, or at least break even. It was a chance to be on ESPN.

How many people get to be on ESPN?

Here on the gluttony circuit, atop the same cultural terrain that made me feel, in my bitterest moments, ashamed to be an American, the eaters were planting their dearest desires—for fair and honest competition, for a pat on the back, for a chance to get noticed, to prove themselves, to make their kids and spouses proud.

The grilled-cheese eaters all stand at the long table. Each one has been given two plates of five grilled-cheese sandwiches, along with at least two cups of water: one for drinking, one for dunking. All of the top eaters pre-moisten their food by dunking, which eases the food's journey down the esophagus and kick-starts digestion.

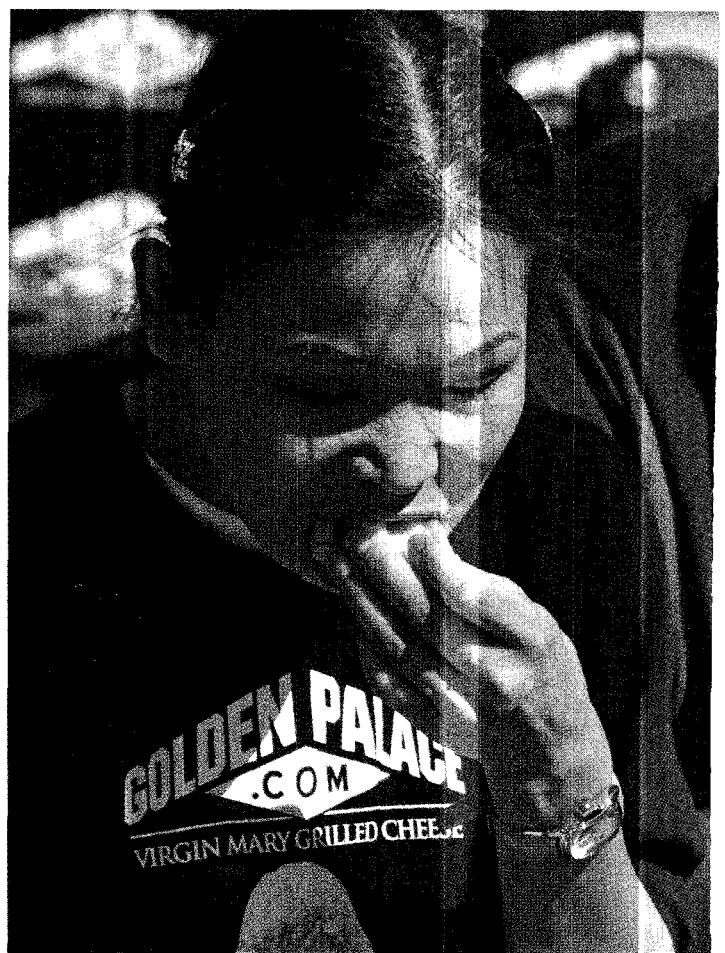
Their hands are not allowed to touch the food until Shea gives the word. He counts down from ten: "Two ... one ... go! Oh my good gracious, we have begun! But it is not simply a contest, it is a journey, my friends, a journey down the alimentary canal, a journey to self-discovery, self-realization ... The big men, the two pillars of competitive eating, the two Horsemen of the Esophagus, 'Hungry' Charles Hardy and Edward 'Cookie' Jarvis, here at this portion of the table ..."

The eaters rip in, dunking the sandwiches in the water cups and cramming them mouthward with no regard for manners or decorum. As performers, they are very Dizzy Gillespie: dimples blowfished, eyes laser-locked on the chow. "Violent" is a word that comes to mind. "Assault" is another. It's scary, the suddenness with which the mood of the contest has morphed from chipper to an insectoid creepiness. Rich "The Locust" LeFevre, who looks like somebody's geeky uncle with his big plastic glasses and gray comb-over, is particularly fearsome. He rotates the sandwiches once they reach his lips, twirls them like they're corn on the cob, and mashes them inward, toward his pinker parts, the force spraying bits in a scatter pattern around his swampy water cup. A gluttonous metronome, he never alters his food-shoveling rhythm. This is not normal.

"Remember, ladies and gentlemen," Shea says, "competitive eating is the battleground upon which God and Lucifer battle for men's souls!"

Sonya Thomas is thirty-seven years old, but you believe it only if you get very, very close. If you don't, she looks eighteen. She speaks in clipped English punctuated by an immigrant's tics—quick laughs and question marks to make sure she's being understood. Movie-watching is one of her hobbies. Her other hobby is driving. She takes long drives to nowhere in particular. She owns a red Pontiac Grand Am, and she drives it very, very fast.

The luxury of a long drive in a red Grand Am was not available to Sonya in South Korea, where she was born and lived until she was in her twenties. Much has been made of the fact that her childhood home had no refrigerator, that her parents were poor (mother a maid, father a carpenter), and that she had to share food with her siblings. At least as crucial to her hunger, however, was her stifling professional life in South Korea. She worked as a typist for a shipping company. "In that time I was a little bit heavier," she said. "Forty pounds heavier. I don't eat any meals. I just eat all junk food ... typist, sitting down, answer the phone, sometimes get sleepy. I don't like that job, so I change it." After she put herself through restaurant school and looked for new work, men told her, "Oh, you are a woman, you cannot do this."



Sonya Thomas, the world grilled-cheese-eating champion

So she moved to America.

Sonya worked at an Air Force base in Maryland, managing a Burger King. She pulled long shifts and saved her money. In 2002 she watched the Nathan's contest on TV and got curious. Over the next few months she experimented at home, then entered a Nathan's qualifier in 2003 and earned a spot in the finals, where she broke the women's record, with twenty-five dogs consumed. In August 2003, she took third in the U.S. Chicken Wing Eating Championship, in Buffalo. In October, despite never having eaten a pulled-pork sandwich in her life, she ate twenty-three in ten minutes, winning \$1,250 and the world title.

But Sonya attracted little national attention until late 2003, when her friend David "Coondog" O'Karma—the tag-team bratwurst champion of Canton, Ohio—told her about Wing Bowl, a Philadelphia chicken-wing-eating contest.

In the simplest terms, Wing Bowl is a radio promotion. It may be the largest pure radio promotion in the country. It is owned, trademarked, and produced by 610 WIP-AM, a sports talk-radio station in Philadelphia. WIP is itself owned by Infinity Broadcasting, a division of the CBS media empire—CBS, UPN, Paramount Television, Simon & Schuster, etc., etc. In 1993 two of WIP's deejays created Wing Bowl as a stunt to boost ratings for *The Morning Show*, which airs from 5:30 to 10:00 a.m., Monday through Friday. Its deejays talk about Wing Bowl every single day for two and a half months, starting in November and ending on the day of the event. The date changes from year to year. Like Easter.

MARTY MARION

In a mischievous mood, Coondog e-mailed one of the show's deejays, Angelo Cataldi, and said he knew a 99-pound girl who could beat the legendary Bill "El Wingador" Simmons. Simmons, a 322-pound truck driver from south Jersey, stood alone in the history of the previous eleven Wing Bowls, having been crowned champion no fewer than four times. Cataldi knew a great story line when he saw one, and gave Sonya a bye into Wing Bowl XII. Stunningly, she proceeded to beat Simmons. He accused her of dropping her chicken on the floor. The *New York Post's* Gersh Kuntzman, the original competitive-eating beat reporter, thought Simmons was guilty of not cleaning his wings. "I could have an entire meal off the meat that Bill left on his bones," he said.

A few months later Sonya beat Simmons in a hot-dog contest, and she won other contests too. Brian "Yellowcake" Subich, a top-twenty eater, tells a story about a baked-bean contest from the summer of 2004. The field included Sonya, Subich, and Cookie Jarvis. After just two and a half minutes, George Shea announced that Sonya was almost done with her 8.4 pounds of beans. "I said, 'You have to be freaking kidding me,'" Subich told me. "What does she do? Pour 'em down her shirt? Put 'em into a plastic bag?" At Shea's announcement, Jarvis lifted his head, glanced at Sonya, registered what Subich calls "the most crestfallen look you could ever imagine," and vomited beans through his nostrils.

Sonya was forcing a realignment in American eating. When asked for the secret to her success, she would just wink and describe her love for her adoptive country, as if that explained everything.

"In America," she told me, "if you have desire you can do anything. Is big. *Big*." She holds her hands out wide. "Big country!"

At the two-and-a-half-minute mark in Venice Beach, Sonya has ten grilled-cheese sandwiches down the hatch.

"Nostradamus, born in the early sixteenth century, actually mentioned the Grilled Cheese Championship in his poetic yet cryptic quatrains," George Shea says. "He said, 'And at one point under the bright sky they shall gather to eat, they shall gather to eat the cheese that has been pouched in bread and grilled!'"

Sonya eats with no recognizable style. She knows that style bleeds speed. She's a machine. Efficient. Just flat *fast*.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Shea says, "the universe has no edge and no center, and like Sonya Thomas's stomach it is ever-expanding ... Is she the best eater in the world? No. That is Kobayashi." Shea means Japan's Takeru Kobayashi. "Is she the best eater in America? Yes. Without any question. Will I phrase everything heretoforeward in the form of a question? No."

Three minutes and thirty seconds left, and Sonya has a small but solid lead. The LeFevres, Badlands Booker, and Jed Donahue are still eating at full tilt, but the rest have started to fall off. "They face," Shea says, "a mission similar to that of Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan—namely, to balance the forces of inflation and deflation."

The outcome is certain, but there's still drama in watching Sonya's tally rise and rise. With a minute-thirty left, Shea loses it. "OH! MY! GOD! LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!" he screams. "Here under the sun, the clouds have parted to allow us here today to demonstrate our commitment to the Virgin Mary and to victory in the world of competitive eating. I am absolutely OVERWHELMED by emotion! I have not felt this much emotion since the birth of my first child, a son!"

Shea's voice cracks with emotion.

"I am feeling the spirit overcome me, ladies and gentlemen! TWENTY-THREE GRILLED-CHEESE SANDWICHES, SONYA THOMAS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!"

He starts speaking in tongues.

A few seconds later, when it's time to begin the final countdown, Shea snaps back into English.

"Ten, nine, eight ..."

A flurry of last-minute face-stuffing, then Shea ends it.

An IFOCE official goes from plate to plate, tallying sandwiches. In a slight upset, Carlene LeFevre has beaten the big boys from New York to take third place, with just shy of twenty-one grilled cheeses. She giggles, raises her hand in acknowledgement of the crowd, then leans over and wipes her mouth on her husband's shirt.

Jed Donahue and Rich LeFevre have tied for second, with twenty-three sandwiches.

Sonya Thomas takes first, with twenty-five. "That's the fifth time I've come in second to Sonya," Rich LeFevre says. "It's getting boring."

In 2003, Ralph Nader sounded the alarm about four "signs of societal decay": three involved corporate greed and congressional gerrymandering, and the fourth was competitive eating.

Shea presents Sonya with a championship belt that says WORLD GRILLED CHEESE EATING CHAMPION in gold letters. She holds it up high above her head and grins for the cameras. Then she grabs her twenty-sixth grilled cheese, takes a ponderous bite, and laughs.

The key benchmark of greatness in competitive eating, akin to rolling a 300 game in bowling or scoring under par in golf, is to eat twenty Nathan's hot dogs in twelve minutes. This is called "doing the deuce." By the time an eater has done the deuce, he or she has consumed 4.4 pounds of solid food and a few pounds of water, has taken in 6,180 calories, 403 grams of fat, and almost 14 grams of sodium, and is ready to lie down someplace air-conditioned, close to a toilet.

Until 2001 the world record in the Nathan's Famous hot-dog contest had hovered in the low to mid-twenties. On

July 3, the day before the 2001 contest, the champs of the American gurgitator corps—Charles Hardy, Ed Jarvis, Coondog O’Karma—preened outside New York’s City Hall, waiting for the contest’s traditional weigh-in ceremony to begin. Suddenly there was a hubbub, heads whipsawing, TV cameras twirling. Some people assumed it was the mayor and his entourage.

Nope. The Japanese.

The Japanese had won the contest for three of the past four years. They emerged from an unseen vehicle and walked toward the Americans. There were two Japanese eaters this year. The first was Kazutoyo Arai, who had won last year’s contest with twenty-five and one-eighth hot dogs, a new world record.

Arai—nicknamed the Rabbit for the way he took mincing bites and bobbed his head while eating—was a short, gentle man with shiny jet-black hair parted down the exact middle. He weighed a hundred pounds exactly. The press swarmed him.

Nobody paid any attention to the second Japanese contestant, a cute little Japanese kid with short, spiky blond hair and a white T-shirt and maroon running shorts. This was Kobayashi, who would become known on the circuit simply as Koby. Twenty-three years old. A kid, really. At least one of the American eaters thought Koby was the Rabbit’s son. Koby’s name hadn’t been mentioned in the City of New York’s press release. The only thing the American eaters knew for sure was that Koby had beaten the Rabbit in Japan, and that his nickname was the Prince. The Americans had heard rumors, though. Don Lerman had heard that Koby had eaten seventy-five hot dogs, but he imagined the dogs were little cocktail franks.

The next day, the Fourth of July, in a slight rain, about 500 people gathered for the contest at Surf and Stillwell avenues, on Coney Island, in front of the original Nathan’s Famous stand. A stage had been erected with a long table and a tarp-like backdrop, decorated with blue-and-yellow Nathan’s signage and balloons. The crowd was a patchwork of umbrellas. The dozens of cameramen on the scene, including a guy from CNN, had wrapped their equipment with trash bags. Some spectators held signs that had been passed out by IFOCE officials to give the appearance of actual eating fandom.

The contest had come a long way in a very short time. Just eight years earlier, it was so small that the Nathan’s CEO, Wayne Norbitz, had had to solicit passersby on contest day to be contestants. But under George Shea the contest had become a highly choreographed affair. There



Takeru Kobayashi, the best eater in the world

top Americans—Booker, Lerman, Hardy, and Jarvis—would all come in at around twenty. The Rabbit would eat twenty-five. Maybe, if it was a really rare and special day, someone would make it to thirty.

At noon Shea kicked off the show by introducing the eaters one by one. Ed Jarvis wore an American flag, Hungry Charles pumped his fists, Coondog ripped his shirt and glared at the audience with a mean grin. Then the Japanese: Koby walked out first, wearing a white headband that read TV TOKYO and made his ears stick out. The Rabbit, as the reigning champ, came out last and hoisted the championship Mustard Yellow Belt—a cheap prop glued with rhinestones—high above his head.

In the seconds before the countdown, Arai closed his eyes like he was meditating. Koby arranged his five large yellow cups of water. The crowd chanted. IFOCE officials brought each eater two paper plates of five hot dogs each. Arai slapped both of his cheeks, hard.

“Join me please,” Shea announced. “Ten! Nine! Eight! Seven! Six! Five! Four! Three! Two! One! Ohhhhhh! ... We’re here to see who’s going to take home this bout ...”

In a twelve-minute eating contest you don’t get a feel for the front-runners until near the end. Everybody knows that it’s in the final minutes that the outcome is determined.

But not on this historic day. After only three minutes and twenty-four seconds, the little Japanese kid with the jutting ears and cute spiky hair had finished *twenty-two* hot dogs. He had almost broken the world record—and he still had close to nine minutes left to go.

Don Lerman was one of the first to realize something was amiss. “All of a sudden,” he recalled, “I’ve got eight and the Japanese guy’s got fifteen. And when you hear that you say to yourself, in your mind, *Should I put my body through this trauma, you know, this workout, if I can’t catch him?*”

was a production script. There were informal run-throughs the morning of the contest. “Everything is kind of rehearsed,” I was told by Mike “The Scholar” DeVito, the 1990, 1993, and 1994 Nathan’s champion and the federation’s then-commissioner. In 2001, DeVito was fulfilling his commissioner’s duty to act as the “head judge,” the one who relays hot-dog totals from the judges, who squat in front of the tables, to the card girls (“Bunnettes”), who display the totals on flippable blue cards they hold high above their heads, so audience members can keep track of the leaders.

Mike DeVito and George Shea already knew approximately how many hot dogs the eaters would eat that day. The

“Oh my God, ladies and gentlemen!” George Shea shouted. “TWENTY-TWO hot dogs and buns!”

After only three minutes and twenty-four seconds, the little Japanese kid had finished twenty-two hot dogs. He had almost broken the world record—and he still had close to nine minutes left to go.

Koby wasn't flagging. The Rabbit was a distant second, with fourteen hot dogs, and the rest of the eaters were in single digits.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Shea said, "Kobayashi, Takeru Kobayashi of Japan, has broken the American record—"

"And the world record!" someone else added.

“—in under five minutes.”

On the right end of the table, Coondog was well on his way to twenty hot dogs. He thought all the cheering was for *him*. Then his counter told him, “The little Japanese kid just finished twenty-seven.”

"No fuckin' way," Coondog said.

"Way," the counter said.

Coondog looked over at Koby. He watched him for a few seconds, then threw one of his hot dogs into the crowd and put down his buns. So did Steve Addicks.

A Japanese TV host narrating the contest screamed:

“KOOBAYYAAASHIIIIII!!!!!!”

Koby reached twenty-nine.

Shea's face had gone slack. A carny barker as cynical and wisened-up as they come, Shea looked at Kobayashi and just faintly shook his head. The man who could spray great

loquacious jets of ballyhoo at audiences for twenty minutes at a time without breaking a sweat or dangling a participle was speechless.

Shea turned away from Koby and looked into the crowd.

"One away," he said.

One away from the magic number.

A Bunnette, having run out of flippable cards, held up a yellow sheet bearing the number 30.

There was a roar.

In the pit, Gersh Kuntzman ran out of numbers. He started furiously writing Koby's totals on the backs of yellow sheets with a ball-point pen. Thirty-four. Thirty-six.

The crowd chanted, "For-ty! For-ty! For-ty!"

Koby kept going, and Kuntzman kept scribbling. Forty-six. Forty-seven.

“KOOBAYYAAAASHIIIIII!!!!!!”

"Ladies and gentlemen, count down with me if you will! Ten! Nine! Eight! Seven! Six!"

“KOOBAYYAAASHIIIIII!!!!!!”

“Five! Four! Three! Two!”

“KOOBAYYAAASHIIIIII!!!!!!”

“One!”

On the back of a yellow piece of paper, held high above the head of the victorious Takeru Kobayashi, was a scrawled number representing his final total.

50.

"Yo sha!" Koby yelled. ("All right!")

The deejay put on an upbeat song, and Shea announced the winners.

In third place, with twenty-three hot dogs, was Charles Hardy, who, as the top American, draped himself with the Stars and Stripes. He was bent over the table, in obvious pain. In second was the Rabbit, with thirty-one hot dogs—six more than his prior world record, and on any other day an astounding total.

But it was Koby who now held aloft a giant gold trophy and the Mustard Yellow Belt. He grinned and grinned. He appeared energetic, bouncy, like he could run a marathon. His countrymen surrounded him, congratulating him in Japanese.

“You’re a beast!” the Rabbit said.

"Aren't you happy?" the Japanese TV host asked.

"Oh," Koby said, "I'm happy."

"You had fifty. But how do you feel?"

"I can keep going."

Gersh Kuntzman rushed to the phone to call in the results to the *New York Post* city desk. Before placing the call, he brainstormed analogies that might impress his editors. This was maybe like Secretariat's winning the Belmont by thirty-one lengths. Or a rookie shortstop's breaking Barry Bonds's home-run record by a hundred.

Gersh dialed and demanded space on the front page. Koby's victory, he said, was not only a watershed moment in competitive eating. It was a singular achievement in all of sports history.

The *Post* desk put him on hold. ▀

TALENTED
IMPASSIONED
UNSTABLE

THE ~~BUFFOONISH~~ MR. CHÁVEZ

A Castro-loving, Bolívar-worshipping, onetime baseball-player wannabe, Venezuela's Hugo Chávez is perhaps the world's most openly anti-American head of state. With Latin America in the midst of a leftward swing, how dangerous is he?

BY FRANKLIN FOER

.....

Supporters of the Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez have elevated the political rally to one of the higher forms of recreation. On Saturday mornings, they board scores of government-provided buses in the slums and working-class neighborhoods of Caracas and journey to the urbane Plaza Altamira, the center of one of the country's richest neighborhoods and the site of many anti-Chávez protests. Amid vans blaring folk music from roof-mounted speakers, they then begin a halting four-and-a-half-mile procession through the city's concrete and steel valley toward the presidential palace. Along the way, marchers slip into restaurants, families picnic on street corners, and vendors meander through the crowd selling beer and Chávez dolls, which recite revolutionary slogans with the pull of a cord.

I attended one such march on a warm day last December. Walking behind a rusted hearse carrying a coffin on its roof, which advertised its contents—wishfully—as the corpse of George W. Bush, I followed the crowd to an imposing red stage, which rose twenty feet above the street. A cloth backdrop featured the visages of Latin American revolutionary heroes, including the Mexican Pancho Villa and Venezuela's own Simón Bolívar, who once lived near here in aristocratic splendor.

By five o'clock, the crowd of several thousand had consumed seven hours of speechifying by Chávez supporters and grown hoarse from nearly as much "¡Viva Venezuela!" chanting. It began to grow anxious for the event's promised climax, when *el presidente* himself would step in front of the microphones. You would wait around this long, too, and just as eagerly, for as everybody in Venezuela knows, Chávez yields incomparable entertainment.

As the sun began to set behind the stage, Chávez finally appeared. A preternatural showman,

he knew better than to head straight to the podium. Instead, he walked to the front edge of the stage, one arm extended toward the crowd, the other holding a microphone. His head was topped with a big-brimmed sombrero, with blue, white, and red embellishments. An entourage of guitarists and horn players, dressed in the ruffled mariachi style, took their place beside him. Before he launched into his own hourlong fire-breathing, anti-imperialist disquisition, the Venezuelan president belted a medley of classic *rancheras*, a romantic genre of Mexican folk music:

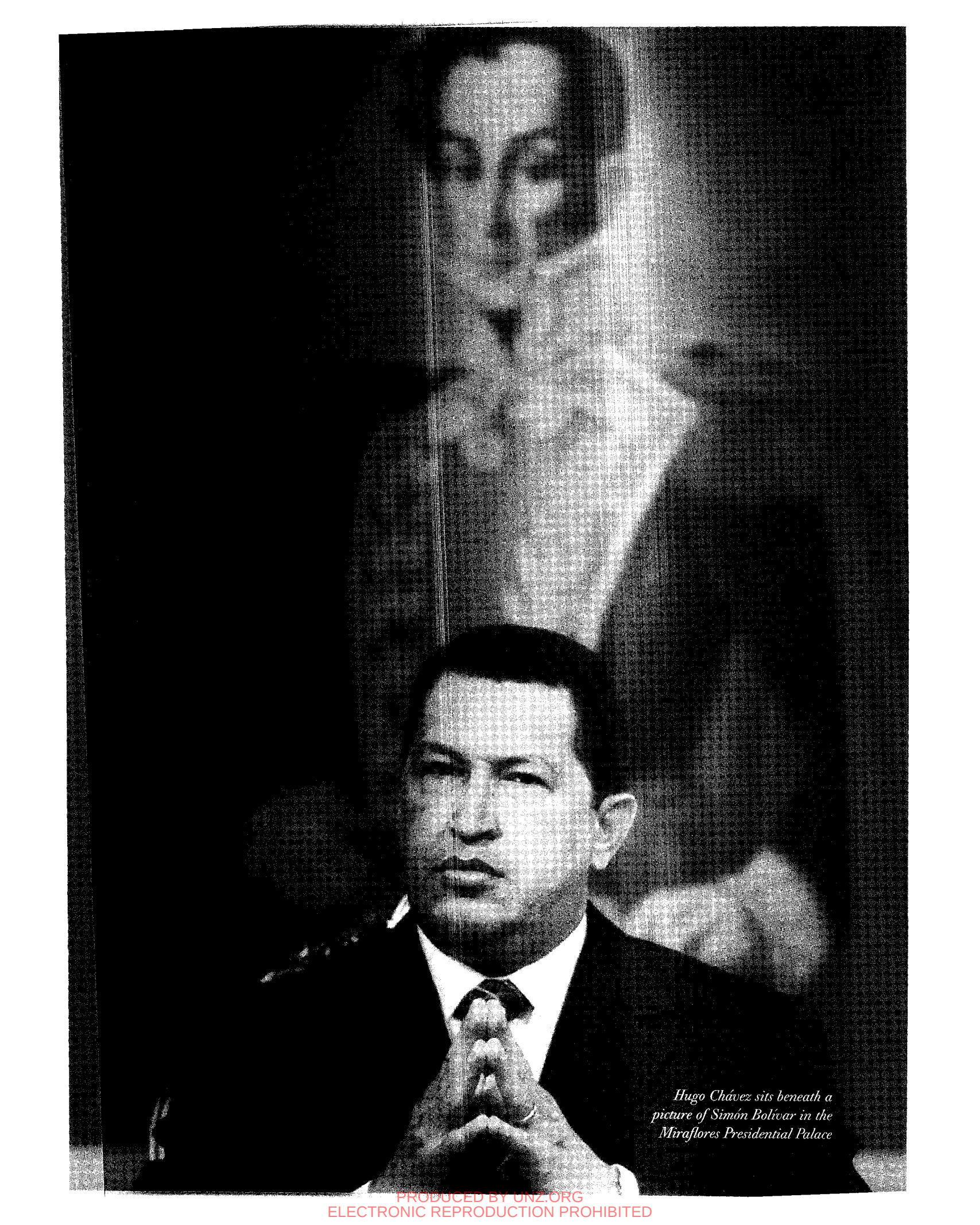
I'm not a gold coin to be liked by everyone
that's the way I was born
and that's the way I am
and if they don't like me
... it doesn't matter.

The performance was characteristic. As a young soldier, Chávez emceed a beauty pageant, and at certain moments in his presidency, he has resembled nothing so much as one of the hosts of the variety shows that Latin Americans adore. On his weekly television program, *Aló Presidente*, he spends hours recounting tall tales of his youth, reciting poetry, and conducting Dick Cavett-style interviews of left-wing guests, from Harry Belafonte to Fidel Castro. He once rode an Iranian-built bicycle around the show's set to highlight his country's economic ties to the Islamic Republic.

Chávez's antics have inspired considerable confusion. Among the Venezuelan upper classes and opposition, there has long been a tendency to dismiss him as something of a buffoon, an uneducated provincial lacking in self-control and basic manners. Washington, for a time, adopted a variation of this dismissive

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KIMBERLY WHITE/REUTERS/CORBIS



*Hugo Chávez sits beneath a
picture of Simón Bolívar in the
Miraflores Presidential Palace*



Chávez sings a ballad at a rally in Caracas

line. The U.S. ambassador to Venezuela during the Clinton era, John Maisto, discouraged searching for significance in Chávez's bombastic, sometimes bizarre, public appearances. "Watch what Chávez does, not what he says," Maisto declared.

But Chávez is not just a clown with some oil money in his pocket. He is a deliberate strategic thinker—ham-fisted at times, but also capable of tactical brilliance.

The proximate cause of the rally I attended was a confrontation with Mexican President Vicente Fox. While Fox had joined George W. Bush in championing the Free Trade Area of the Americas, or FTAA, a kind of hemispheric NAFTA, Chávez had proposed an alternative trade agreement that would exclude the United States. Several weeks before the rally, Latin America's leaders had discussed the two plans at a presidential summit in Argentina. Later, on his television show, Chávez showed mysteriously obtained footage of Fox making his argument for the FTAA in private. He then denounced Fox as a "lapdog of the empire," a taunt designed to highlight the Mexican president's ties to the Bush administration. "Don't mess with me, sir, or you will get stung," Chávez blustered. A diplomatic crisis ensued. Fox demanded an apology. Chávez refused to provide one. Ambassadors were recalled.

This isn't the way that heads of state normally conduct business. But Chávez wasn't flying off the handle when he uttered these insults. Nor were his comments (or the airing of the footage that occasioned them) primarily motivated by a desire to advance his trade agenda. By finding an excuse to denounce Fox as an American toady and baiting him into a response, Chávez was hoping to bolster the presidential campaign of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, a Mexican socialist—and potential political ally—running to replace Fox (whom term limits prohibit from seeking another term).

Indeed, by some accounts Chávez's advisers have already been in touch with López Obrador to advise him, and the

Venezuelan ambassador was reported to have attended meetings organized by López Obrador's supporters. Chávez's TV stunt certainly worked in his ally's favor. While Mexicans briefly rallied around Fox in response to the attack, that moment quickly vanished. The attention of the press focused on Fox's support of Bush—one newspaper cartoon in *La Jornada*, a Mexico City paper, depicted Fox blocking a soccer ball flying toward Bush's head. Politicians of all stripes soon joined to cudgel the Mexican president for his cozy relationship with the United States and his alienation of the rest of Latin America, but López Obrador—who had long been the major candidate most critical of Fox—surely benefited the most. Polls conducted in late February suggest that López Obrador will glide into Fox's old office in July's election.

I asked one of Chávez's oldest friends, Francisco Arias Cárdenas, to explain this melding of buffoonery and strategic acumen. Arias Cárdenas has known Chávez since they were cadets in the army in the 1970s. Together they plotted a failed coup and spent over a year in prison. After the aborted uprising transformed both into national heroes, Arias Cárdenas turned on his old friend and ran against him for president in 2000. Now they are in the midst of a slow reconciliation. Chávez "does have a unique sense of humor," Arias Cárdenas told me, pausing to make sure that he phrased the rest of his answer carefully. "Chávez is a superb strategist. When we were in the army, Chávez took a course in psychological warfare in El Salvador. He became a big proponent of reverse psychology, baiting opponents into underestimating your strength. Chávez does this all the time. On his TV show, he might pick up a carrot and call it a beet. His opponents will begin laughing at him: 'What an idiot! He can't even distinguish a carrot from a beet.' But after the show, I guarantee you Chávez will be the one laughing. He'll think to himself, *I can't believe I fooled them into talking about carrots and beets all week.*"

BOLIVARIAN DREAMS

During his run for the presidency in 1998, Chávez would sometimes convene political strategy meetings. The meetings were largely unexceptional, featuring quotidian tactical debates. But there was one notable idiosyncrasy: the conference table around which the meeting's participants sat always had one empty chair pulled up to it. The chair was always near Chávez. No one was permitted to sit on it. According to one of his advisers, Chávez once pointed toward it and proclaimed, "This is the chair of the liberator." He meant Simón Bolívar, who has been dead since 1830.

Hugo Chávez is hardly the first Latin American leader who has attempted to shroud himself in Bolívar's aura. (Bolívar is revered throughout much of the region; through more than ten years of armed struggle and popular exhortation, he secured independence from Spain for Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador.) But few others have done so with the same conviction. As a young boy, Chávez memorized Bolívar's speeches and re-enacted his crossing of the Andes. "Instead of Superman, my hero was Bolívar," Chávez told an interviewer in 1999.

HOWARD YANES/REUTERS/CORBIS

When he first began plotting to overthrow the Venezuelan government, in the early eighties, more than ten years before the actual coup, Chávez and his co-conspirators swore loyalty to one another on a spot beneath a tree where Bolívar had famously enjoyed resting. They would call themselves the Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario 200—200 being the number of years separating Bolívar's birth from their cadre's founding. Chávez tends to invest these sorts of personal milestones with mystical significance, noting how fate has placed them on important anniversaries in his hero's life. Alberto Garrido, one of the most respected analysts of Venezuelan politics, told me, "Chávez likes to quote a Pablo Neruda poem about how people return every one hundred years. He's perfectly convinced that he has a historic mission, which is to assume Bolívar's mantle." In 1999, Chávez changed Venezuela's official name to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Where Bolívar fought to throw off the yoke of Spanish colonialism, Chávez considers the United States the imperial power from which all of Latin America must now be freed. Traveling the motorways of Caracas, you can't avoid the billboards touting Bolívar's jeremiad, "The United States seems destined by providence to plague Latin America with misery in the name of liberty."

Chávez's hostility to "the empire," along with his more specific goal of purging American influence from the region, has driven his foreign policy. He opposed the war in Afghanistan and has flamboyantly cultivated relationships with members of the "axis of evil." He was the first democratically elected head of state to visit Iraq in its pariah years between the Gulf and Iraq wars. He has invited Iran to open factories in Venezuela.

His theatrics distinguish him as perhaps the world's most anti-American head of state. Chávez has described Condoleezza Rice as an illiterate, and has suggested that she suffers from sexual frustration (though he has declined to offer to help her with this problem, saying, "I don't make that sacrifice for my nation"). Bush he calls "Mr. Danger," or simply "asshole." Last year, Venezuela withdrew all of the assets that it had held in U.S. banks and transferred them to the Bank for International Settlements, in Switzerland.

Just as Bolívar fulfilled his revolutionary destiny with a gun, Chávez speaks incessantly about the coming military confrontation with the gringos, a war that he predicts will last for a hundred years. "It wouldn't bother me at all to end up on a mountain with a rifle defending the dignity of this country," he announced last November. "The leaders of this country have to be ready to make an example, even give our lives if we have to." In part, this is just rhetoric designed to exaggerate the American menace and bolster his domestic popularity. In part, Chávez is slipping into his romantic mode, as you might expect of a president who has disseminated a million free copies of *Don Quixote* to his compatriots. But Chávez has also closely followed the Iraq insurgency, and has called on his armed forces to learn how to mimic the Sunni resistance in the event of an invasion. That is, he wants to arm the people so they can form a guerrilla resistance.

To this end, he has begun organizing citizen militias, purchased 100,000 new Kalashnikovs, and assigned books on asymmetric warfare to his top brass. Last year, he intoned, "If imperialism ever has the idea of challenging Venezuela, it [will] have to deal with Bolívar's people." When I asked Nicolas Maduro, a fire-breathing, mustachioed Chavista who heads the National Assembly, how his political benefactor views Venezuela's relationship with the United States, he replied, "Conflict, in all likelihood war, is the future."

Bolívar briefly united a northern swath of the continent into a single nation of Gran Colombia, stretching from Ecuador to Panama. Chávez speaks of fulfilling this aborted vision, or some version of it. During the first seven years of his presidency, he has used Venezuela's oil wealth to buy himself a substantial leadership role in the region, signing deals to sell Venezuelan crude at pennies on the dollar to other South American countries. He has talked about creating a Bank of the South that would free the region from the international finance system. Last summer, he launched a new satellite news network called Telesur, which will be beamed across Latin America and is meant to counter CNN en Español. "That network provides a U.S. spin on the news," Telesur's director, Aram Aharonian, told me. In contrast, Telesur bills itself as the "anti-hegemonic network."

This anti-American bent has helped make Hugo Chávez a hero of the international Left—a title that he has aggressively courted. Long before he took over the presidency, Chávez planned Bolivarian congresses bringing together

Chávez's critics dismiss him as something of a buffoon, but he is not just a clown with oil money in his pockets. He is a deliberate strategic thinker capable of tactical brilliance.

Latin America's indigenous movements and leftist parties. As president, he has built a public-relations machine to woo Americans and Western Europeans of a certain sensibility. His government has placed self-promotional ads in *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*. He has hired staff from Global Exchange, which helped organize the massive protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle in 1999, to run a Venezuelan Information Office in Washington.

This outreach has turned Caracas into a refugee camp for socialists displaced since the tumultuous events of 1989. Chávez's presidential palace harbors French and American activists. Marta Harnecker, the Chilean Marxist who wrote the seminal defense of the Cuban revolution, has an office there, too. Chávez routinely holds court with star academics and activists—from the anti-war icon Cindy Sheehan to Princeton philosopher Cornel West to the British essayist Tariq Ali—who return from Venezuela announcing the marvels of Chavismo, his amalgamation of anti-Americanism, Bolivarian independence, and Castro-tinged socialism. "We

in the United States [hear] so many lies about President Hugo Chávez and the Bolivarian revolution,” West declared in January. “This revolution is real.”

While this kind of talk from the ideological fringe may sound like mere agitprop, the revolution is indeed real. Chavismo represents a bigger threat to American interests in the region than anything the United States has seen in decades. Not since the Cold War has America faced such a well-financed ideological competitor on its left. And Chávez has played his opening moves so masterfully—and the American government has played its so ineptly—that he may yet realize his neo-Bolivarian dream.



Chávez (right) embraces Brazil's president, Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva (left), and Argentina's president, Néstor Kirchner

It is strange to find Venezuela run by a revolutionary who bows in the direction of Fidel Castro—and even stranger to find Hugo Chávez leading the revolution. As Chávez came of age in the sixties and seventies, political scientists celebrated Venezuela as an island of social-democratic stability on a volatile continent, a kind of Norway on the Caribbean. It had abandoned dictatorship for democracy in 1958, decades before most of Latin America. Civil liberties, trade unions, and political parties flourished. Oil money—especially after the 1973 price shock—allowed the government to build infrastructure and keep the economy running smoothly.

But the shock also created unsustainable economic expectations. Perhaps more important, it permitted graft to spread unchecked throughout a rapidly expanding government, regardless of which party held power. By the 1980s, lower oil prices had left the country with a corrupt government and a citizenry that was deeply disappointed with its economic fortunes. In short, Venezuela's mood in the late 1980s was in many respects similar to that of much of Latin America today.

Chávez exited adolescence dreaming not of politics but of a baseball career, as a pitcher. To get in front of Major

League Baseball scouts in the 1970s, however, you needed to get to Caracas first. He enrolled in the military academy in the capital city, intending to stay for only a year. But he had overestimated the potency of his fastball, and so he stayed in the military, unintentionally landing on one of the great social conveyor belts in Latin America. More than any of its continental counterparts, the Venezuelan army transported fresh recruits from the slums to the middle class.

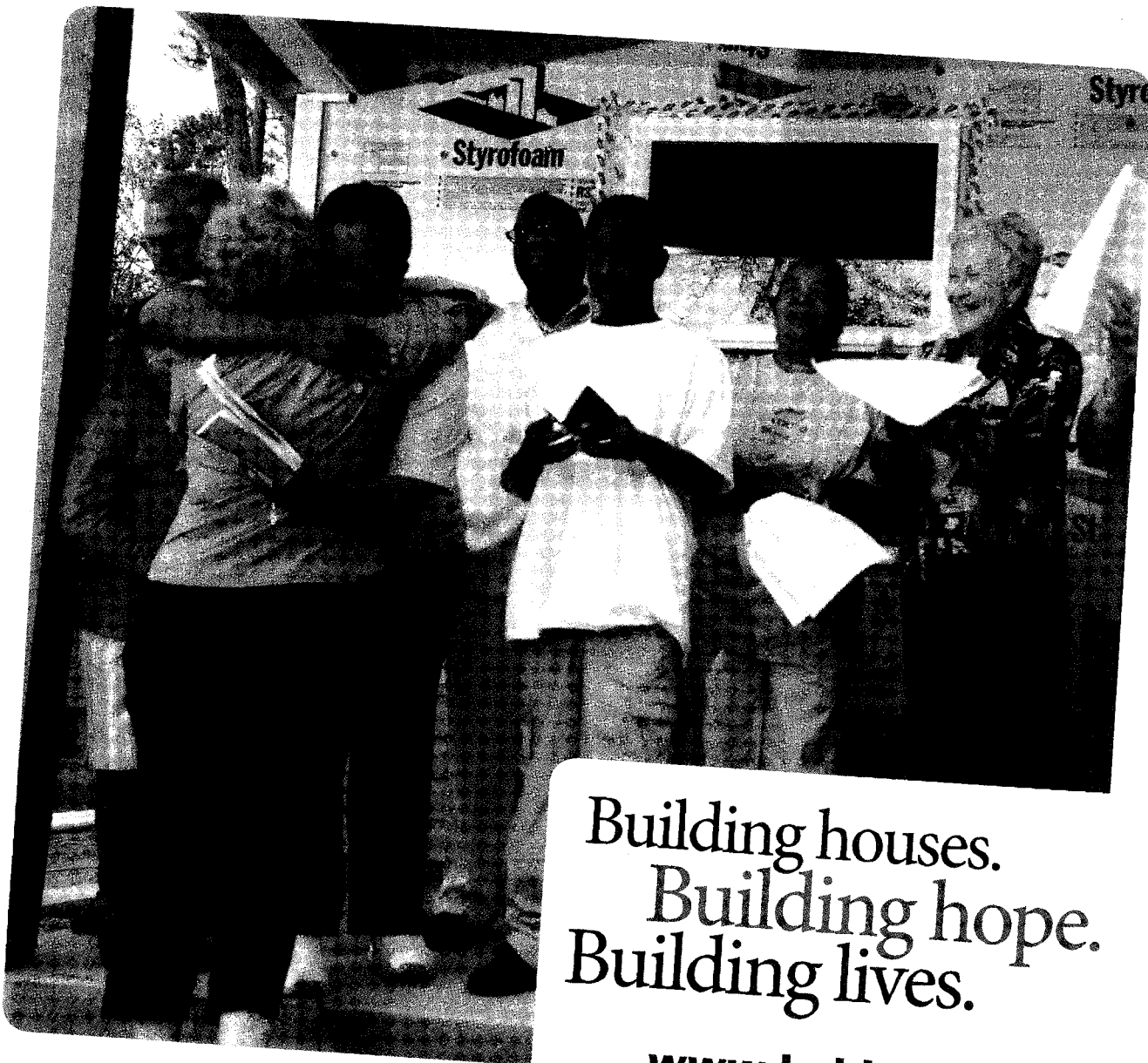
As a young soldier, Chávez worked to put down a persistent rebellion of armed leftists who had been inspired by Castro and were waging a mostly ineffectual guerrilla war from the hills. By his account, he reached an epiphany as he lay down to sleep in a camp run by an intelligence colonel. He heard the cries of captured guerrillas, beaten with towel-wrapped baseball bats. A moral crisis gripped him. He later told the Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez that, as he hung in his hammock, he wondered, *Why am I here?* The next day he committed himself to joining the rebel cause. Through his older brother, a Marxist university professor, Chávez volunteered his services to the guerrillas.

For ten years, while rising through the ranks of the army, Chávez lived a double life, operating as a revolutionary conspirator under the monikers “José María” and “Che María.” “He would drive five hours in a beat-up car to attend an hourlong meeting,” his old friend Francisco Arias Cárdenas told me. “He led our group, because he was the hardest-working.” Chávez traveled secretly—sometimes bewigged, sometimes smuggled in the trunk of a car—so that his military superiors wouldn't detect his subterfuge. The conspiracy he hatched to overthrow Venezuela's democratically elected government was dubbed Plan Zamora. And when its zero hour finally arrived, on the night of February 3, 1992, Chávez assigned himself the most difficult task: he oversaw the assault against the presidential palace in Caracas, on which the success of the whole operation turned.

Ten percent of the military had enlisted in Chávez's rebel army. On the day of the coup, the rebels seized military bases and other key positions across the country without much difficulty. But Chávez himself had no such luck. Military intelligence caught wind of his intentions, forcing him to alter his plans; then his communications equipment failed. These glitches didn't inspire the confidence of his fellow soldiers. The broad majority of the armed forces declined to follow his lead. With dead comrades already lying by his side and the high command threatening to bombard his position, Chávez pulled the plug. He told the head of the armed forces, “It's OK, my general; I give myself up.”

To encourage Chávez's other battalions to surrender, the army allowed him just over a minute to address the nation on television, before taking him off to jail. Wearing his red paratrooper beret and speaking without notes, he went live at 10:30 a.m. on February 4. “Comrades,” he said, “unfortunately, for the moment”—*por ahora*—“the objectives that we had set for ourselves have not been achieved ... now is the time for reconsideration; new possibilities will arise again, and the country will be able to move more definitively toward a better future ... Comrades, listen to this message of solidarity.

ERIKO PERES/AP



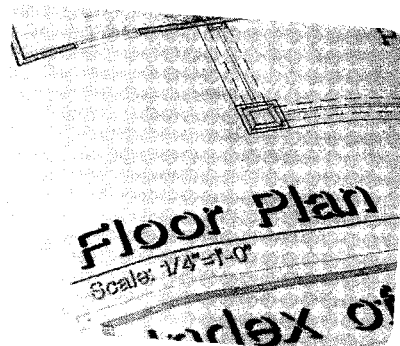
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I am grateful for your loyalty, for your courage, and for your selfless generosity. Before the country and before you, I alone shoulder responsibility for this Bolivarian military uprising. Thank you." The television networks repeated this address over and over, hoping to dissuade imitators. Instead, they made Hugo Chávez a national icon. Venezuelan politicians of the time never took square responsibility for their failures, and those failures were numerous—Venezuela in the early nineties seemed on the path to economic perdition. And the phrase "*por ahora*" provided a rare cause for optimism.

Red berets quickly emerged as trendy accessories in the Caracas slums. Celia Flores, who is now a militant Chavista and member of the National Assembly, had been a mother without political passions before Chávez's television appearance. "The next day, I began putting up posters to free him," she told me. "I hadn't really considered what I was doing. I was just moved, like I had never been before."

With the aid of new comrades like Flores, pressure mounted on political elites to release Chávez. In 1993, Rafael Caldera, an old lion of Venezuelan politics, won the presidency, in large part by exuding empathy for Chávez. Three months into his presidency, Caldera freed him. Five years later, after campaigning in the same red beret that he wore on television, Chávez won the Venezuelan presidency. He bested his closest rival by 17 percent.

What accounts for Chávez's decision to join—and quickly place himself at the center of—a left-wing insurgency? Sincere ideological belief surely played a part. The groundwork for his conversion had been laid many years before. A friend's father, a Marxist teacher in his town, used to send Chávez home with copies of Marx's writings, as well as biographies of Bolívar and the other nineteenth-century Latin American revolutionaries. "It's very fashionable to consider Chávez an opportunist," says the political analyst Alberto Garrido. "But if you look back at his biography and examine his writings, you can see that ideology is central to understanding him. He has deeply believed in a left-wing form of Bolivarianism for much of his life."

Even so, Chávez's ambition cannot be traced to ideological belief alone. One need not peer too deeply into his personal history to find the abundant and overlapping personal insecurities that drive him.

Despite his strategic acumen, Chávez has at times been susceptible to gurus, some of them charlatans, like Norberto Ceresole, the Argentine Holocaust denier. Chávez's revolutionary beliefs reached full bloom under the tutelage of Douglas Bravo, a legendary guerrilla fighter whose manifestos recast Bolívar as a great hero of the Left. These gurus have succeeded in cracking Chávez's notoriously hermetic inner circle because Chávez likes to create the impression that he is a cosmopolitan intellectual. His speeches and conversations constantly reference the likes of Galbraith, Tolstoy, Negri, and Rousseau. (To be sure, he doesn't always hit the mark, confusing Thomas Mann and Thomas More, or citing the cultural conservative José Ortega y Gasset's *Revolt of the Masses* as a great leftist work.)

In fact, Chávez is a country boy from the interior plains. He didn't see Caracas or the sea until after his seventeenth birthday. His longtime friend William Lara, who directs the president's political party, comes from the same region as Chávez. Lara told me, "It's like we're from West Virginia or a place like that. We don't have the same codes or cultures. City people know rock-and-roll; we don't know rock-and-roll."

When he was a young boy, Chávez and his older brother were sent to live with their grandmother, Rosa Ines, in a nearby town. (Their parents, primary-school teachers of limited means, continued to raise the brothers' four siblings.) This early separation bred complicated feelings, even resentment, in later life; he once spent two years without speaking to his mother. According to his biographers Cristina Marciano and Alberto Barrera Tyszka, when Chávez's mistress asked him if he loved his mother, he replied, "No, I respect her."

Chávez's psychiatrist Edmundo Chirinos told me, "The love of the people is a narcotic to him. He needs it, the same way he needs his coffee." (At one point in his presidency, Chávez drank up to thirty demitasses each day.)

Chávez the child imagined himself as the heroic Bolívar, scaling the Andes to free an oppressed continent. He moved to Caracas hoping to become a baseball star. The need to be seen as a hero—to feel adulation—seems deeply embedded in his character. He must have been disappointed (and perhaps something more) to find himself in an anonymous military career instead. His psychiatrist Edmundo Chirinos told me, "The love of the people is a narcotic to him. He needs it, the same way he needs his coffee." (At one point in his presidency, Chávez drank up to thirty demitasses each day.)

Like Bill Clinton, Chávez calls his friends late at night, with no particular agenda. After Chávez triumphed in the 1998 presidential elections, he telephoned the writer Ibsen Martínez. (In the early nineties, Martínez had written a program that Chávez adored, a popular *telenovela* celebrated for drawing attention to corruption and social inequities; they later struck up a relationship during Chávez's presidential campaign.) Martínez recounted their conversation to me: "My wife picks up the phone. 'It's Hugo Chávez,' he says. She didn't believe him. But it was him. He said, 'I'm calling from my motorcade.' He was describing the situation like a kid. 'I removed a black screen so that I can see my people. Look, I'll put the cell phone outside and you hear them screaming to me.'"

THE CHAVISTA SOCIETY

Chávez describes his approach to government as "socialism of the twenty-first century," a phrase borrowed from the German-Mexican theorist Heinz Dieterich, among others. This brand of socialism, its adher-

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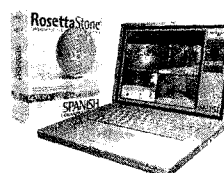
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ents claim, appreciates the failures of past revolutions, in particular the failure to create genuinely “participatory democracies.” Chávez, his intellectual supporters argue, has come much closer to hitting the mark, especially since the unveiling of his controversial new constitution in 1999.

Under the auspices of that document, the president can be recalled by a referendum, and the poor can launch privately owned cooperatives, subsidized by the state. Chávez has energetically promoted those aspects of the constitution that grant more power to “the people.” Many people on the street carry little blue books that contain the text of the new document. They read it on the subway and can cite its verses from memory. Seemingly every Chavista I met wanted to send me away with a copy. Even taxi drivers and maids have become constitutional boors.

The distribution of the blue books is a part of Chávez’s campaign to create what he calls a “protagonist” system—one in which the Venezuelan people have a direct, unmediated relationship with their leader. But there’s no mistaking the driving impulse behind the document itself: to concentrate power in the presidency while weakening those branches of government that might, in fact, mediate on the people’s behalf.

“Chávez embraced democracy out of practical considerations, not theoretical ones. He came around to the idea of participating in elections for a simple reason: he believed that he could win.”

The constitution trimmed the legislative branch from a potentially obstreperous bicameral body to a more easily managed, one-chamber National Assembly, which can pass legislation into law with a single vote. It eliminated congressional oversight of the military, allowing Chávez to more easily stack the army’s top ranks with friendly generals. And it lifted an old provision that prevented the president from serving consecutive terms. Chávez now wants to further amend this rule, so that he can serve a third term. His most powerful political allies openly predict that he will remain in power until 2030.

Chávez’s democratic bona fides have always been in question. When he emerged from prison in 1994, he went to live with an old veteran of Venezuelan politics named Luis Miquilena. A leftist, Miquilena had visited Chávez in prison and smuggled a phone into his cell. In Miquilena’s small apartment, the two men could hear each other’s breathing as they slept in adjoining rooms.

That’s not to say they slept much. Miquilena would argue with Chávez late into the night, attempting to persuade his protégé to reject armed struggle. “Eventually, he came to see that he could succeed through democratic processes,” Miquilena told me, while smoking a long cigar in a wing-back chair. When I asked him about his late-night bull ses-

sions with Chávez, Miquilena (who has since fallen out with the president) replied, “Chávez embraced democracy out of practical considerations, not theoretical ones. He came around to the idea of participating in elections for a simple reason: he believed that he could win.”

To visitors, Venezuela hardly resembles an authoritarian state. Unlike Cuba, for instance, private companies abound, and a privately owned press goes about its business. You can sit in a café and listen to people loudly denouncing the president as an ogre. Chavistas will point to these facts whenever their critics begin to denounce the country’s anti-democratic turn.

But that’s just another example of Chávez’s shrewdness: he has led the country in a more authoritarian direction only slowly, carefully calibrating his repressive measures so that they are too incremental to trigger popular outrage. When his opponents describe the prevailing atmosphere, they begin with the “Tascón List.” In 2003 and 2004, petitions circulated demanding referenda to recall the president—just the sort of people-empowering action enshrined as a right in the 1999 constitution. Soon thereafter, a list of the petitioners’ names and national identification numbers mysteriously appeared on the Web site of a pro-Chávez congressman named Luis Tascón. The government began denying these petitioners passports, government contracts, and public welfare. Two years ago, in a statement that he later recanted, the health minister brashly declared that any ministry employee who signed the list would be fired, “because [the petition] is an act of terrorism.”

Media intimidation has begun as well. The Law of Social Responsibility in Radio and Television, passed in 2004, allows the government to suspend stations that “promote, defend, or incite breaches of public order or that are contrary to the security of the nation.” The law has cowed the television networks, once devoted to dropping rhetorical napalm on the regime. Venevision, once a particularly notorious anti-Chavista bastion, is now known as the Disney Channel, for its increasing abundance of cartoons and bland newscasts.

By adding twelve new chairs to the twenty-seat supreme court, and packing them with loyalists, Chávez has begun to domesticate the courts as well. He proudly presented the new jurists like a trophy at the opening of the court’s 2006 session. With the president in attendance, the robed justices rose to their feet and began to sing a favored chant of their benefactor: “*Uh, ah, Chávez no se va*” (“Uh, ah, Chávez is not leaving”).

Public opinion is far more deeply divided over Chávez than is the judiciary, and protests are relatively common. In 2002, the army high command grew nervous about the president’s feints toward a fully nationalized economy, and led a coup against him. The coup temporarily succeeded, and might have endured if Chávez’s would-be successor, Pedro Carmona, had not immediately announced the dismissal of the National Assembly, the supreme court, and all of the country’s mayors and governors. Carmona (now ignominiously known as Pedro the Brief) succeeded in spooking the public and prompting widespread protests—

and the army reinstalled Chávez just two days after removing him (but not before an eager Bush White House had tacitly recognized Carmona's government).

Since 2002, Chávez has purged the military of disloyal officers and stepped up his patronage of those who remain. He has backed off his rhetoric about confiscating private property, which had alienated Venezuela's middle and upper classes. Perhaps most importantly, he has showered Venezuela's large lower class with cash.

Chávez's base resides in the *ranchos*, the slums that spill down the hills surrounding Caracas. Social scientists refer to the residents of these neighborhoods as the "*marginales*," and they exist within informal communities, often without police services, municipal buses, stores, or even running water.

While they are not politically monolithic, many *marginales* have an empathic connection to Chávez, whom they already consider one of their own because of his dark skin color and folksy demeanor. His references to Jesus—"If Christ were here, among us, right now, there's no doubt that Christ ... would vote for the revolution"—and his political style bear a striking similarity to those of the evangelical preachers who have acquired massive followings in the slums.

The prime conduits for Chávez's support for the poor are programs that he calls "*misiones*," another evangelical allusion. Chávez created them on the advice of Castro, and they mimic the Cuban approach to exporting socialism to Latin America. Castro would flood countries with resources intended to quickly heal social ills and demonstrate communist know-how. So if the poor can't get health care in Venezuela, why not invite 17,000 Cuban doctors to live and practice in Caracas *ranchos*? Illiteracy? Chávez has sent a horde of teachers into the barrios.

All this spending has a tremendous psychological impact on the poor, who have felt neglected and cheated by generations of politicians. Chavista investments in the slums are obvious. For the first time, blighted neighborhoods have government-subsidized grocery stores, access to the Internet, and doctors tending to their children. These improvements have translated into palpable optimism. Some polls show that Venezuelans are more sanguine about their economic future than Canadians or Americans.

Whether this optimism will endure, though, is open to question. Spending has not been designed to produce sustainable results, and there is little evidence of any coherent social policy. Cuban doctors can't compensate for the country's ramshackle public hospitals. According to the government's own official data, infant mortality increased in 2003 and 2004, the last two measured years. Over the course of Chávez's presidency, the percentage of the population earning less than \$2 a day has risen from 43 percent to 53 percent.

Today, Chavez's desultory government spending and overall economic approach resembles the populism of the Argentine Juan Perón far more than any authentic socialist model. It is an incoherent mess, dependent on constant infusions of oil money, and is highly unlikely to lead to sustainable development for Venezuela. It is governed primarily by an age-old autocratic goal: the maintenance of personal power.

Chávez has always appeared more interested in "liberating" Latin America's underclass than in actually fretting over the contours of the society that follows—the legacy he craves is that of a hero, not a technocrat. That may be one reason why so much of his attention now seems focused abroad. Perhaps his neglect of the Venezuelan economy will be his undoing. Perhaps oil prices will fall by half, which might destabilize his regime. But history suggests that oil-rich autocracies can often perpetuate themselves—through showy spending, selective patronage, and control of the military—for a very long time.

THE TURNING OF A CONTINENT

Chávez touts the importance of what he calls "pluripolarity." Implicit in this notion is that Venezuela will emerge as a new regional power to counter the United States—a promise that appeals to his ultra-patriotic countrymen and helps account for his domestic popularity.

There's one obvious way in which Chávez could truly stagger the United States. Venezuela is an important supplier of oil to America, providing about one-seventh of its petroleum. Chávez appreciates the power this provides him. By touting plans to build a pipeline to the Pacific and cutting deals with Chinese and Indian energy companies, he creates the impression that he might someday cut off the United States—a move that could send American oil prices soaring as the country scrambled to find new suppliers.

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But while the United States relies on Venezuelan oil, Venezuela is even more dependent on the American market. More than half of Venezuela's oil exports head north toward the Gulf of Mexico—some 1.5 million barrels a day. Over the course of Chávez's presidency, Venezuela has received billions of dollars from America in oil purchases.

Ultimately, not even a lover of Quixote dares invest too much hope (or cash) in preparing for a break with the American market. Nature has tied Chávez's arms. Venezuelan crude comes from the earth in a particular viscous form that requires specialized refineries, the type that exists in Louisiana and Texas, not China or India. The country's fleet of tankers is geared toward transporting this oil to the Gulf of Mexico, and can't be reversioned for longer hauls. What's more, Venezuela doesn't just export its oil to the United States; it actually sells the stuff there in the 14,000 Citgo stations that the state oil company owns.

None of these obstacles is theoretically insurmountable, but the barriers are so high that neither Venezuela nor its Asian customers have gone much beyond daydreaming of a new relationship. Turning those daydreams into reality would require significant planning, and the United States could simply rearrange its buying patterns—oil is a fungible commodity over anything but the very short term.

There's one obvious way in which Chávez could truly stagger the United States. Venezuela is an important supplier of oil to America. Chávez appreciates the power this provides him.

But Chávez can still wound the United States by turning his region sharply against it. While Latin America doesn't have the same strategic importance as the Middle East, America depends on it for trade and for its cooperation in stamping out narco-trafficking—both of which could diminish in a political environment where Chávez holds sway. (Venezuela has allowed members of FARC, the Colombian narco-terrorist group, to cross freely into its territory, and a senior official within the Colombian government has accused Chávez of actively supporting the group.) And at a time when U.S. international leadership appears to many to have lost its legitimacy, coalition-building—for continued trade liberalization, for punitive sanctions against rogue regimes, for military action—has become both more difficult and more important.

Oil money is of course one source of Chávez's regional influence. Last year, he signed an agreement to provide thirteen Caribbean countries cheap financing for oil imports. He recently bought up more than \$1 billion in Argentinian debt, allowing Argentina to pay off what it owed to the International Monetary Fund. (Argentina will end up paying Venezuela more than twice the interest rate that it had been paying

the IMF, but that seems of little importance to Argentinian President Néstor Kirchner, who said the early repayment will allow "freedom for national decisions." Kirchner recently fired his economy minister in favor of a more leftist choice. His new foreign and defense ministers favor strong ties to Chávez's government.) Chávez has also offered to buy \$300 million of Ecuador's debt, and is providing aid and lending to Bolivia. His spending is not altruistic: he is self-consciously trying to assemble a bloc of nations that can be set against the United States on matters of trade and international leadership.

But his regional influence extends well beyond the reach that his oil money provides. He has tapped into a deep vein of frustration and anti-Americanism throughout his continent, and is skillfully exploiting it.

Latin America is in the middle of a leftward swing, a reaction against the economic policies of the past two decades. These early-nineties reforms, known as the Washington Consensus, aimed to counter the continent's runaway inflation and massive debts with free trade, privatization, and balanced budgets. But despite this spurt of neoliberalism, the reformers failed to deliver on their much-hyped promise of prosperity. Not only did they fail to alleviate the terminal problems of poverty and corruption; they also helped inspire the revival of a raw populism that many Latin Americanists had left for dead.

How far left will the region swing in reaction? Teodoro Petkoff, the editor of the Caracas paper *Tal Cual* and one of Chávez's prime adversaries, has written a book called *Dos Izquierdas* ("Two Lefts"). Under his taxonomy, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva represents one of these lefts, which pays lip service to Castro but adopts a more pragmatic attitude toward economics and remains committed to liberal democracy. Like European social democracy, it ultimately seeks to humanize capitalism, not destroy it—a political program that could help Latin America correct the excesses of its neoliberal experiment without entirely undermining its core economic contributions.

Chávez, on the other hand, represents a more retrograde form of socialism. His belief in strong leaders over strong institutions, his preference for patronage over careful policy, and his mistrust of some of the basic elements of the capitalist system add up to disaster for government transparency, democracy, and development.

Which of the two lefts will eventually win out is unclear. Most residents of Latin America still believe that market capitalism is the only system that can lead to development, and Lula is more popular than Chávez overall. But there's no doubt that Chávez's approach is winning adherents. Chávez may soon have close friends running Nicaragua, Mexico, and Peru. Argentina's Kirchner seems the junior partner in his relationship with Chávez, despite his country's bigger economy and military. Chávez's protégé Evo Morales has already won the Bolivian presidency, in part by following Chávez's own model of anti-American rhetoric and populist appeals. Morales has promised to decriminalize coca production and redistribute land, and plans to rewrite Bolivia's constitution this summer. Even Alvaro Uribe, the president

of Colombia and America's staunchest ally in South America, has appeared with Chávez in front of Simón Bolívar's home and bashed American "meddling."

Chávez's performance last November at the Summit of the Americas, held in the Argentine resort of Mar del Plata, reveals why his appeals to the leaders and citizens of Latin America have been so successful. He skipped away from the awkward group photos with his fellow heads of state, and addressed a crowd of 25,000 anti-globalization activists gathered for a "counter-summit" in a soccer stadium. He wrapped his arm around Diego Maradona, one of the greatest soccer players of all time, who's probably more admired than any politician at the official proceedings. "I think we came here to bury FTAA [the Free Trade Area of the Americas]," Chávez intoned. "I brought my shovel."

He was playing a clever inside-outside game: at the same time that he huddled with leaders like Lula and Kirchner, he used the media to go over their heads and speak directly to their radical political bases. This tactic works well because most Latin American leaders still depend on support from their own radical parties. Their activist bases still genuflect toward Havana, and constantly lament that their presidents lack Chávez's gumption. "They live in fear of Chávez turning against them, because they worry that their people might not take their side," one U.S. State Department official told me. This dynamic has given Chávez the run of the Southern Hemisphere.

The United States hasn't shown much deftness in tilting this fight between the two lefts toward pragmatists like Lula. Instead of acknowledging the shortcomings of Latin America's recent neoliberal experiment, it has insisted on pushing forward with the FTAA—an agreement that has little chance in the current political environment. Where Chávez constantly announces new plans to distribute cash around the region, the United States continues to cut back on its aid packages. And while the Bush administration isn't about to confront Chávez seriously, it often gives the impression that such a policy is in the works, allowing Chávez to bait the United States into verbal duels—battles that reinforce Chávez's mythological version of himself.

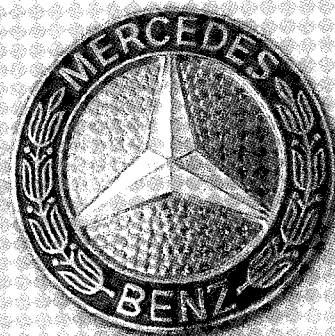
This hardly makes him the second coming of Simón Bolívar. Nonetheless, there are unavoidable similarities between the two—including some that Chávez might not care to acknowledge. Chávez claims that his favorite book is García Márquez's historical novel about Bolívar's last days, *The General in His Labyrinth*. If this is true, he must know that Bolívar ended his life distraught and depressed. During his final years, Bolívar devolved from radical democrat to dictator. He both praised democracy as "the most sacred source" of power and proclaimed that "necessity recognizes no laws." When Gran Colombia failed after eleven years of struggle, during which Bolívar himself came to embody many of the oppressive qualities he'd originally campaigned against, he dismissed the continent as ungovernable and descended into a bitter senescence. He died and was buried in Colombia; Venezuela, whose populace had eventually turned on him, had made him an exile in his final years. Chávez, despite his

love of poetry, never seems to utter one of Bolívar's most poignant lines: "Those who serve the revolution plow the sea."

Historically, Latin American revolution has proved to be just as futile as Bolívar imagined. Because of its peculiar political temperament, the region has swung back and forth on a dialectical rope between socialism and authoritarianism, occasionally stopping, mid-swing, on governments that combine the worst attributes of both. But in recent decades, the region looked like it might finally transcend this pattern of manic change. Widespread adoption of liberal-democratic governance and an embrace of market capitalism seemed to bring relative prosperity and genuine stability within grasp.

Chávez has the potential to disrupt this progress and revive Latin America's old political habits. According to a recent poll, only about half of the region's citizens—including minorities in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil—now believe that democracy is always the best form of government. Latin America is vulnerable, and Chávez has provided a blueprint not just for harnessing anti-Americanism but for the slow consolidation of power. Along the way, he may succeed in baiting the United States into a rhetorical fight that it can't win, and impeding its international leadership. But ultimately, the United States will not be the biggest loser in the battle Chávez is waging. It will never suffer nearly as much as the people of the continent he dreams of liberating. ▀

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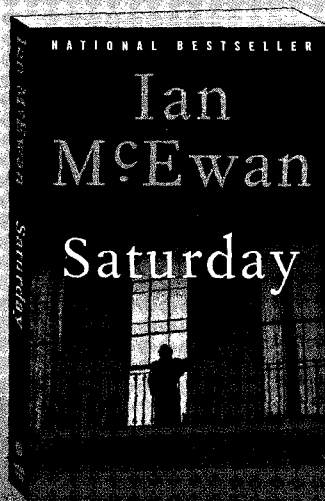
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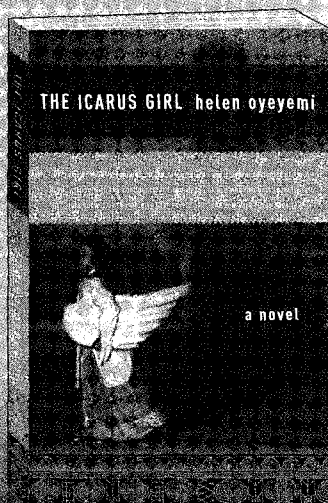
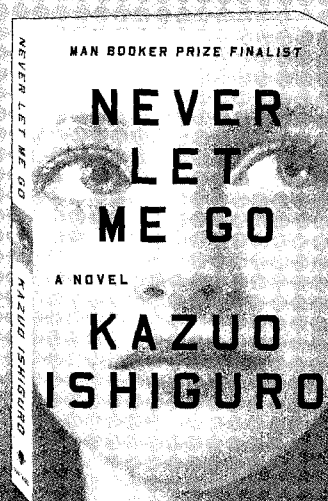
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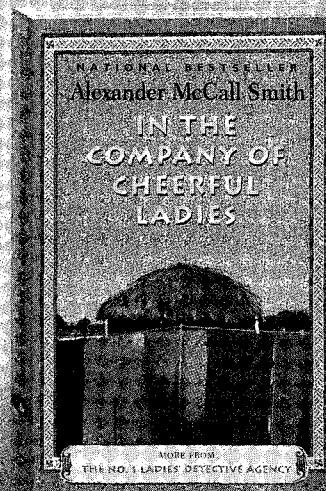
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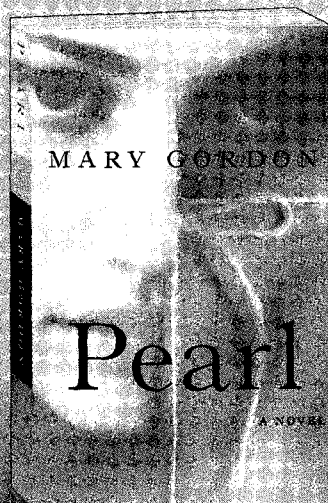
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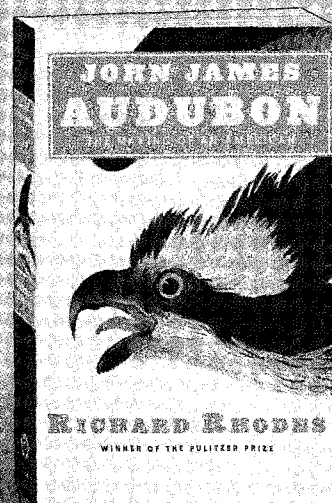
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 **VINTAGE**

THE CRITICS

Books, Manners, Mores

MAY 2006 | THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

Modernism, Minimalism, Fundamentalism

What to read this month

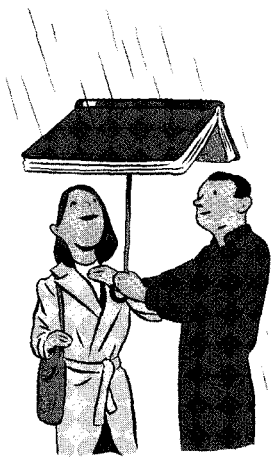
BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

Glenn Murcutt, an Australian architect who in 2002 won his field's highest honor, the Pritzker Prize, is probably the most atypical of the great living architects. Most "starchitects" design buildings for an international clientele; although Murcutt has been deeply influenced by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and the Finnish designer Alvar Aalto, he refuses to work outside Australia, insisting that extraordinary architecture emerges only from a profound grasp of climate, culture, and environment. Most elite architects head large firms housed in slick offices; Murcutt, though, is a sole practitioner who works in a cramped, messy office in a semi-detached house. And whereas most virtuoso architects win and sustain their reputations by erecting major civic buildings, Murcutt has built only a few modest public edifices, including a mining and minerals museum in the outback (!) and a visitors' center for a remote national park; his stature rests almost entirely on the more than 500 clean-lined, ecologically sound houses he's designed for the Aussie haute and high-minded bourgeoisie. These crisp, light-filled, marvelously airy, typically long, lean, and low-slung rectangular homes—built largely of steel, aluminum, glass, and corrugated, galvanized iron (his signature material)—are, with Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater, probably the most environmentally sensitive modernist masterpieces ever built, belying the notion, as critic Anne Whiston Spirn put it, "that ecological architecture must be rustic architecture with sinuous forms, half-buried in the ground, or nostalgic imitation of vernacular building forms." Murcutt has made it his mission to "touch the earth lightly," as he says (borrowing an aboriginal saying), and these limpid structures fairly float upon their sites, as they respond exquisitely to the topography, flora, temperatures, sunlight, views, winds, and rainfalls of their settings and also manage to be jaunty, relaxed, and remarkably livable. Because all his buildings are on the world's second-most-remote continent, and because most of them are private dwellings, they've been seen by fewer people than the work of any other renowned architect, a fact that makes a comprehensive, accessible, well-documented, and



GLENN MURCUTT:
BUILDINGS +
PROJECTS
1962–2003

by Françoise Fromonot
Thames and Hudson



amply photographed study of his oeuvre especially crucial. Luckily, this book is among the stellar works of contemporary architectural publishing. Just released in an especially durable and attrac-

tive paperback edition, at a far more approachable price (an entirely justifiable \$49.95) than that of the hardcover, this work, whose original, French edition won the French Architecture Academy's 2004 Architecture Book Prize, happily marries beautiful but always comprehensible photography (which conveys the unusually complex context in which Murcutt places his structures) with detailed, sometimes witty, consistently precise text (Fromonot, a Parisian architect and a co-editor of the architectural review *Le Visiteur*, shuns the grandiloquence that infects her profession; her translator, Charlotte Ellis, has done a superb job). Containing two lengthy and perceptive critical essays and chapters on nearly forty of Murcutt's buildings (along with a good number of their plans, sections, and elevations), this book illuminates both Murcutt's work and the art of architecture generally.

Those in the mood for some modernist eye candy will be sated by **Hariri & Hariri Houses** (Rizzoli). The architectural team of the Iranian-born sisters Gisue and Mojgan Hariri heroically eschewed the postmodernist juggernaut of the mid-1980s in favor of the sleek Miesian modernism that's always been their hallmark (their Sagaponac House, completed last year, has already acquired the status of a neo-modernist icon). But as the gorgeous photographs in this gorgeous book make clear, theirs is a sumptuous minimalism, owing to the high level of craft and finish they bring to their projects and the luxurious materials they employ. Looks, though, are all this book's got. The pro forma foreword by Richard Meier; the equally imprecise, phoned-in introduc-

tion by the usually penetrating critic Paul Goldberger; the sweet but jejune essay by the Hariris' friend, the poet John Brehm (it's so gaseous that you'd swear it was written by an architecture critic); and the very short text on each house all fail to elucidate the contributions of this very talented if sometimes over-intellectualized team. Those in search of a more considered (if equally poorly written and somewhat dated) appraisal should read instead *Hariri & Hariri: Work in Progress*, by the Hariris and Kenneth Frampton and Steven Holl.

The Collected Stories of Amy Hempel, by Amy Hempel (Scribner). Few fic-



tion writers are as intensely admired by their peers as is Hempel, though she's never published a novel. Her reputation rests solely on the four landmark collections of short fiction gathered here, including the long-out-of-print *At the Gates of the Animal Kingdom* (used copies of which are both rare and expensive). She will forever be tagged a minimalist, which is accurate enough if largely unrevealing, since there's both great and execrable minimalist fiction. True, a ruthless economy characterizes her writing, but it's owing not to a studied lack of affect (an attribute that marks the most predictable and lazy minimalism) but rather to a lapidary precision and a severe, poetic aesthetic. Often she startlingly punctuates that aesthetic with a wit, reminiscent of Deborah Eisenberg's, that has evolved from the sly and often loopy to the dark and mordant (Hempel has a gift for the off-kilter one-liner; in a story in her most recent collection, the narrator deploys one on a man who's raping her). Dogs are Hempel's career-long obsession, and no one has written of them and their relationship to human beings with more exquisite sensitivity and clear-eyed affection. Another constant is loss: nearly all her stories, written in a perfectly modulated voice, circle around broken people and the dissolutions, disillusionments, and bereavements they endure. Although leavened by a wry rue, Hempel's is a hard-boiled sensibility, and each of her

stories—many only a few pages long, and one of which consists of a single sentence—will leave the reader shaken, for they're all spot-on exemplars of V. S. Pritchett's 1982 description of the genre as "the glancing form of fiction that seems to be right for the nervousness and restlessness of modern life."

Fundamentalism and American Culture, by George M. Marsden

(Oxford). Although de Tocqueville (yes, him again) recognized that "there is no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America," evangelical Protestantism—America's quintessential religious expression—has traditionally been relegated to the backwaters of American historical and literary studies. But over the last four decades, a number of the most innovative works of American history—including John Boles's *Great Revival*; Rhys Isaac's *Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790*; William McLoughlin's *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*; Nathan O. Hatch's *Democratization of American Christianity*; Jon Butler's *Awash in a Sea of Faith*; Mark Noll's *America's God*; and David L. Chappell's *Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow*—have brought evangelicalism to the center in the study of our cultural and political life.

In many ways the most influential such work is this book, first published in 1980 but now reissued with a lengthy new chapter. Marsden elegantly synthesizes theological, social, cultural, and intellectual history to elucidate the roots and development of Christian fundamentalism—a movement, contrary to the stereotype, that is largely northern in its origins and that Marsden, with characteristic concision, defines as "militantly anti-modernist Protestant evangelicalism"—from the last quarter of the nineteenth century through the 1920s. An almost impossibly rich work, it explicates a host of thorny theological, philosophical, and epistemological controversies and positions (Marsden, for instance, insightfully draws the connection between, on the one hand, the intellectual appeal of dispensational premillennialism and the opposition to

Darwinism and, on the other, the peculiarly American “non-developmental” understanding of history). Primarily, though, it reveals fundamentalism’s central cultural contradictions: its sense of custodial responsibility for the United States as a “Christian nation” (a sense that grew out of a broader evangelical heritage that embraced such evangelical reformers as the abolitionists) together with its conviction that the “end times” are close at hand (a belief that militates against any political involvement) and its intensely separatist impulse to (as Romans 12:2 would have it) “be not conformed to this world” (Marsden shows how fundamentalists were a truly counter-cultural force in an America that was increasingly embracing self-fulfillment and the consumerist ethos). This is the one book every American who wants to understand fundamentalism should read. It’s also among the best assessments of the cultural transformations that convulsed America from the late nineteenth century to the years immediately following the First World War (transformations this country is still assimilating) and, in its masterly new chapter, of the peculiar and far-from-inevitable political turn that fundamentalism has taken since the 1970s.

And while you’re at it, read what is essentially this book’s sequel: Joel A. Carpenter’s almost equally masterly *Revive Us Again* (published in 1998), which chronicles fundamentalism’s “lost years”—the period from its nadir following the Scopes trial, in 1925, when it seemed to have lost all influence and prestige in the culture at large, to 1949, when, after Billy Graham’s triumphant Los Angeles revival, it was poised to transform the religious landscape of postwar America. Following Marsden, Carpenter incisively reveals the contradiction posed when fundamentalism—a movement that was at once anti-modernist and populist—eagerly, subtly, and brilliantly assimilated the latest promotional techniques of mass communication and the style and idiom of popular entertainment to propagate the old-time religion. ▀

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor and the national editor of The Atlantic.

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BOOKS

Rhymes With Rich

One woman's conscientious objection to the "mommy wars"

BY SANDRA TSING LOH

More and more these days, reading women's writing fills me with a vague, creeping, slightly nauseating feeling. Lying in bed the other night, cradling some seltzer water, my stomach gurgling, the word for my malaise suddenly came to me: "afflufemza," wherein the problems of affluence are recast as the struggles of feminism, and you find yourself in a dreamlike state of reading first-person essays about it, over and over again. We've always had rich mothers, of course; it's just that the boundaries between the privileged and the un- used to be clearer. Back in the eighties, for instance, I was among the many couch, or at least futon, potatoes who used to love *Dynasty*—the Mothra-versus-Godzilla grapplings of the Carringtons and the Colbys, of Joan Collins's deliciously nasty Alexis and Linda Evans's nurturing, oddly affectless Krystle. Alexis was the Execu-Bitch; Krystle, the Saintly Wife. It was the eternal female ur-struggle, ever campy, ever watchable, ever conveniently framed for us—out there in the distance—by that swoopily hammy Bill Conti score, those soaring trumpets, those glittering Denver skyscrapers.

Twenty years later, gone are big hair, big diamonds, and big shoulder pads. In their place, among America's most affluent mothers, is a kind of gnawing, grinding anxiety—and a mediacentric conviction that this fretfulness is somehow that of every woman. Or so it appears in the just-published *Mommy Wars: Stay-at-Home and Career Moms Face Off on Their Choices, Their Lives, Their Families*, edited by Leslie Morgan Steiner. The cover flap describes the angst thus:

With motherhood comes one of the toughest decisions of a woman's life: Stay at home or pursue a career? The dilemma not only divides mothers into hostile, defensive camps but pits individual mothers against



themselves ... Ranging in age from 25 to 72 and scattered across the country from New Hampshire to California, these mothers reflect the full spectrum of lifestyle choices.

OK, let's slow down for a minute and unpack this description of Everymother before, with iced mochaccino latte in hand, we hurriedly whisk on. There are, in fact, great varieties of American mothers left out of Steiner's anthology. They're women for whom work is not a "lifestyle choice" but a necessity—a financial one, gauche enough, and not an emotional one. Why do they work? To keep the electricity on. Such women would include, oh, single-mother waitresses, hotel maids, factory workers, grocery-store cashiers, manicurists, even countless low-level white-collar functionaries, from bank clerks to receptionists to data processors. Imagine a nanny wondering about her lifestyle choice: *Why have I always had this burning dream to spend sixty hours a week taking care of other people's children? Is it because of unresolved communication issues from a lonely childhood? Would I experience more personal fulfillment—find*

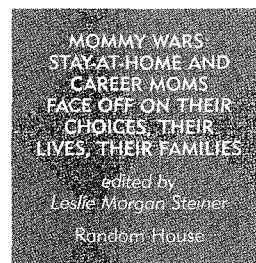
more of my true "voice"—in department-store retail? Perhaps these are issues I should examine this week in therapy, before I put my call through to Po Bronson.

But clearly no one at Random House thought to red-pencil this, because it's a given today, in non-zine, non-blog, hardcover-anthology women's writing, that "Everymother" implicitly means

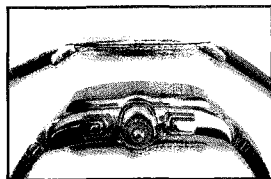
"every mother from the well-defined e-mail list of people like us"—media professionals who have now become their own class and tribe. A female member of the mediocracy can now seize the bully pulpit for all women without needing to give even lip service to

those women whose lives, unglamorously enough, are more blue collar than blue state. (Actually, that's not entirely true: they do occasionally give lip service, in the most bizarre and self-aggrandizing ways. More on that in a bit.)

However, even when one excludes most American mothers, there's still plenty of material for a book. Life at the top may be privileged, but it is not simple. Take the mini-autobiography proffered by Steiner, a graduate of Harvard and Wharton, the general manager of



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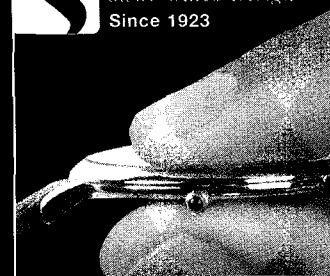
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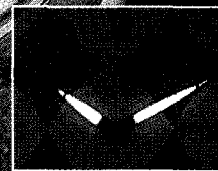
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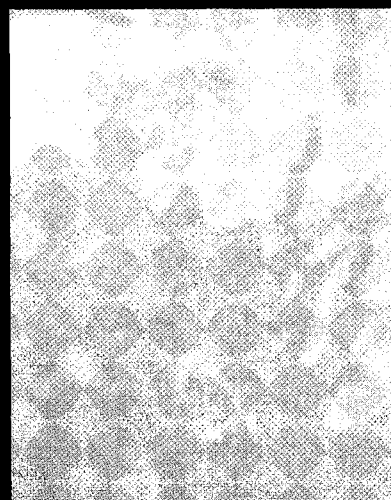
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The Washington Post Magazine, and the former Johnson & Johnson executive who was responsible for the international launch of Splenda. Her dilemma, she explains, was being married to an investment banker who kept getting ever more attractive jobs in ever new places. The crisis came when he was "offered the presidency of a hot Internet start-up," which would require a family move to Minneapolis. The pain of it had Steiner lying on the parquet floor in her beloved Upper West Side, fighting tears: "Within a ten-minute walk lay my son's favorite playground, my sister's apartment, my in-laws' condo, Gymboree, a pediatrician as kindly as Big Bird, five or six Starbucks, the Reebok gym, and at least a dozen museums." But no. "My husband calmly explained that we were very lucky and really had to go. Millions of dollars in stock options, he said."

(Again, for comparison, I don't want to go red state on you but a military wife might take the news of a move differently, perhaps even thinking something like, *Yes, moving is inconvenient, but sacrifice is part of the duty our family owes our country* ... which in the "mommy wars" universe would be a strange notion full of foreign words.)

Steiner's female-empowering argument is that her only choice, as a mother, was to return to full-time work at a plum *Washington Post* advertising job in order to gain the economic leverage needed to have a say in household decisions. It is a leverage that Steiner's own depressed, rum-and-Coke-swilling, stay-at-home—if brilliant, Radcliffe-educated—mother never had, since Steiner's cheerful lawyer father was the one who worked. And, well, what with the battling upper-class incomes and the pretty continual flap, almost as though in a wind tunnel, of Ivy League sheepskins, it was at this point that even I—a media professional who has the freedom to type, at my desk, about the waitresses who labor hourly for minimum wage—began, from my relatively privileged position in the cosmic sisterhood, to feel the cultural disconnect of the downwardly mobile.

Never mind that—with such *Mommy Wars* essayists as *Publishers Weekly* editor-in-chief Sara Nelson, ten-year Viking editor Dawn Drzal, *Washington Post*

Magazine deputy editor Sydney Trent, and *Lizzie McGuire* creator Terri Minsky—it's conceivable that in the next wave of cultural rightsizing we could have a genre of women's literature written entirely by media executives; it's just that, even when the media moms quit work to raise their children, they're still able to spend a lot more than I do, on a daily basis.

It began with little things, like Georgetown mom Page Evans's frustrating day juggling three-year-old daughter Katherine's ballet class with six-year-old daughter Peyton's kiddie yoga class (\$15 per session). There was stay-at-home mom Monica Buckley Price's resignation about her husband's having to work out of town, co-executive-producing *The Joan Cusack Show*, in order to cover her autistic son's expensive Santa Monica preschool and therapy bills of \$700 a week. On the Upper West Side, Drzal's small son mistakenly consumed a brunch centerpiece of two pounds of Barney Greengrass eastern Gaspé smoked salmon. In yet another gastronomically sophisticated part of Manhattan, working-from-home mother Susan Cheever's baby literally hurled foie gras and made playthings with quenelles de brochet. (I wondered if there was any Random House editor for whom that image had given a moment's pause: "Baby hurling foie gras ... Let them eat cake ... Marie Antoin—hmm.")

Then came the onslaught of designer labels. Not since Daisy Buchanan wept over Gatsby's shirts have individual items of clothing been so emotionally fraught. There were the traditional "Armani success suits" (which one abandons when one leaves office life), "Merrell Jungle Slides" (as casual wear, worn to pick up the kids), a "new BCBG suit" (bought for speaking engagements, though the cost of it unfortunately offsets the honorariums), a favorite "forest-green wool Regina Rubens" (to cheer oneself up enough while returning to one's publishing job in Manhattan). The autism piece, while poignant in its descriptions of Price's son's condition, happens to be titled "Red Boots and Cole Haans," a reference to the mom's "funky new Anthropologie outfit" and Cole Haans, which loom touchingly large against the preschool children's tiny Stride Rites

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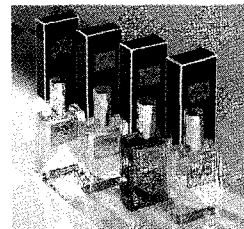


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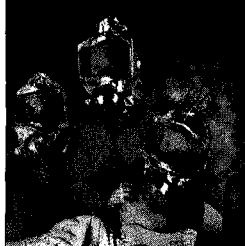
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(the piece recounts a much happier day than at Gymboree, when the son soiled his "fabulous blue-and-white-striped Petit Bateau outfit"). No surprise, then, that the battle between stay-at-homes and career moms is described unfailingly in terms of outerwear and accessories. In "Sharks and Jets," Evans writes, "I imagine Jerome Robbins choreography. The stay-at-home moms in their park attire of rubber clogs, khakis, and T-shirts. The working moms in their pencil skirts, pressed blouses, and Ferragamos." Stay-at-home mom Catherine Clifford finds it difficult to retain her equanimity with "the mom who groused jealously that she couldn't afford not to work, then grabbed her Kate Spade bag and headed off in her new Mercedes SUV." (The image of Upper West Side—or, for geographic diversity, Georgetown—women hitting each other over the head with Kate Spade bags was hard to shake.)

All right, some might argue—so what? Affluent mothers have problems too—call it the Anxiety of the Mommytocracy, if you will. And people shelling out \$25 for a hardbound book of essays are more likely to be intrigued by the lives of blue-coast elites than by those of poorly dressed office managers in Toledo, married to traveling salesmen, whose children eat pimiento-flavored Tuna Helper. Indeed, what's wrong—what's unfeminist, even—with celebrating not just the affluent but the powerful? What's honestly wrong with, to quote Naomi Wolf's glowing blurb for *Mommy Wars*, using "real women's voices to animate what is often a frenzied but ill-informed debate, thus bringing the texture, warmth, hope, and angst of real mommies—and real wars—to the table"? (Well, it could be argued that one of the problems is that Naomi Wolf feels this sampling is representative of real mommies.)

It's not like affluent moms don't have their "work" cut out for them too: "Every day at noon I would pack up the babysitter with tiny cartons of soy milk and cinnamon graham crackers, lest my son accept a forbidden cookie," Dawn Drzal reveals.

Then I would go food shopping, setting out for a distant organic market or ethnic enclave to hunt down

new prepared foods or a particular exotic ingredient for his meals (which my husband and I enjoyed as well). When the babysitter left at six, she would deposit him in his high chair, freshly bathed, and he would happily watch me sautéing onions or marinating tofu or cooking his favorite dinner, red lentils with garlic, onions, and ginger.

Calgon, take her away!

Further, to read these accounts, it's clear that even privileged women can suffer surprising emotional fragility. Conversations at cocktail parties are particular minefields. When high-powered career women shed their outer Armani layers to become stay-at-home moms, they suffer, over the fondue, risk of the dreaded "greet and turn," or "turn and pivot." Relatively high up on the pyramid of needs is a sense of "selfness," illustrated nicely here by Page Evans:

"So, what do you do, do you work?" a fifty-something gray-haired man in a black turtleneck and tweed jacket asks. We're standing in a claret-colored living room at a book party in Cleveland Park, and the bartender has just handed him a glass brimming with bourbon over ice.

"I'm basically a stay-at-home mom," I say.

"Oh, well, that's such an important job. Kids grow up so fast, don't they?"

"Yeah, they do," I say.

And that's the end of it. Turn and pivot.

But wait. Wait! Don't you want to know what I think about what's going on in the world? I want to scream out. I've spent the past seven years trying to improve my mind, to prove that I'm more than "just a mom." I see more plays, read more op-eds, take classes, visit museums. I'm in a book club. I write essays.

In another illustration of hard-fought (even, here, arguably hard-hearted) selfness, Terri Minsky describes having a demanding TV career that could put her in L.A. for months at a time, while her family remained in Manhattan. At one point, her two woeful children ask, "Mommy, do you love your television show more than us?" When she says "no," they counter with, "Mommy, then why are you with the show and not with us?" And what she thinks, but poignantly cannot say, is, "I want to do this. I need to do this. This is who I am, and it's taken a lot

of therapy not to apologize for that." She then tells a roomful of network executives that her son eventually supported her need to self-actualize, and the moms among them burst out crying.

This would all be fine if proffered as the self-exploration of a consciously affluent class, or even as, heavens, *Dynasty*-style escapist literature (I'd love to hear Joan Collins deliver that Minsky line). But Steiner goes further, arguing that although stay-at-home moms do, in their own intimate way, add value to their communities, "without the money, the power, and the loudspeaker successful careers bring, women will never have the collective bargaining power to make the world better for ourselves, our children, and all the women who can't leave abusive husbands, the ones who wear veils, the moms who earn less than minimum wage cleaning houses and don't have choices about birth control or prenatal care or any other kind of care."

Again, to slow down and unpack (although it's almost enough just to note the delicious, vaguely hand-waving phrase "the ones who wear veils"): Steiner's enumeration of "money, power, loudspeaker" suggests that little good can ever be done by women suffering any combination of poverty, obscurity, or—most horrific of all—lack of media access. In Los Angeles, some of our most powerful community movers are the *promotoras*, Latina health workers, whose unusual access to, rapport with, and ability to get signatures from brown-skinned working-class families make them critical players in current demands for more accountability in failing inner-city schools. Again, I see that within the "mommy wars" universe, my previous sentence holds many strange and unfamiliar phrases.

Leaving that aside, the question remains: Once they have the proverbial loudspeaker, how much social good do affluent, successful, powerful women really do (other than treating their wonderful full-time nannies like members of the family)? I didn't notice any successful career women in the book mentioning specific campaigns they're waging on behalf of the less fortunate, nor did I catch to what women's or children's charities proceeds from the book will be given. (I would love to know the inner

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dynamics of this collective-bargaining arrangement of which Steiner speaks, whereby a turbo woman's pursuit of a glamorous career somehow makes the world better for her minimum-wage sisters.) These days, I suppose, it is feminist enough an action to edit a women's anthology, get on *Oprah*, sell a million copies, and make a pile of cash, all of which you keep, presumably so that your investment-banker husband can't move the family again. (One of our most famous and successful women, Oprah Winfrey, actually does have furthering the social good as part of her personal mandate. But that's a value many seem to forget. A colleague of mine, Rebecca Constantino, at Access Books, which creates and updates libraries for underserved children, received an Oprah Angel award for her work. Constantino noted wryly to me that her appearance on the show drew less than \$500 in cash contributions, but 1,000 calls asking how to get on *Oprah*.)

Most troubling of all is not how little good is being done by affluent, successful, loudspeaker-bearing career women, but that they seem so unaware of who even needs help, even if those in need happen to live all around them. While our prominent female essayists are parsing fashions and feelings and moods—while they are probing, as Wolf puts it, the "angst of real mommies"—there are some elephants undealt with in the room. Consider the opening incident of the book, at a party at Washington, D.C.'s elegant Sulgrave Club, where Steiner is discussing her "mommy wars" book idea with a fellow publishing professional:

Another neighbor, a stay-at-home mom whose kids go to school with mine, joined us. This woman is the head of the parent-teacher association at our public elementary school, as constant and welcoming a presence on the playground as a greeter at Wal-Mart. My friend, a former *Washington Post* reporter who makes her living posing provocative questions, asked our neighbor what she thought of my book idea. Specifically, what she thought of moms who work. Without breathing, the stay-at-home mom answered, "Oh, I feel so sorry for them."

My cheeks flushed like a child with a fever.

I think it's worth noting (because apparently no one else will) that Washington, D.C., public schools are 96 percent minority and that Leslie Morgan Steiner is white—a racial juxtaposition not atypical for this anthology. Except for, most notably, two African-American essayists who live in suburban Maryland (the one mentioning race citing it as less of a factor with her white in-laws than her turbo-powered career), the twenty-seven contributors to this anthology are almost all white women who live in major urban centers: Washington (whose public schools, to repeat, are 96 percent minority), New York (85 percent minority), and Los Angeles (91 percent minority). While these mothers tend to be, as indicated, top media professionals, the overwhelming preponderance of brown schoolchildren is something no one seems to particularly notice. The troubles of the poor and the brown don't seem to lap up much around the ankles of any of these mothers, whether they're shod in Chanel slingbacks or Cole Haan loafers. (Almost as though in an afterthought, there are a handful of exceptions in the back of the book.)

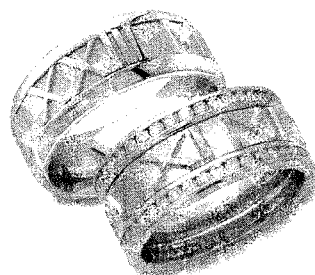
Of course, I suppose there's a chance that the Washington public school Steiner's kids attend is 4 percent white, and that she's just admirably color-blind. But it's more likely, given the increasingly Johannesburg-like patterns of American urban racial polarization, that the school she's referring to is enclaved—that is, that it's the quality elementary school, in the big brown city, where the kids of the white well-to-do go. ("Enclave" being my verb for the self-sorting occurring in our large urban areas.) I'm not singling Steiner out for unusual behavior here; anxious, educated (particularly Ivy League-educated), upper-middle-class parents generally, and understandably, want their children to go to the better schools (Steiner's stay-at-home neighbor is forced, in contrast, to send her children to what Steiner calls a "mediocre public high school"). I may even have things just half right: Steiner's kids' school may happen to be overwhelmingly minority and excellent, and the snotty PTA president may, in fact, be a colorful, headscarf-wearing immigrant from Zimbabwe.

But what is safe to say is that in the often embattled No Child Left Behind world of U.S. public schools—where the poorest inner-city children may deal with ever-changing arrays of substitute teachers, class sizes in the fifties, and textbooks published in the '60s—it's not the worst problem a mother can have if her over-involved PTA president, when pressed on a hot-button topic at a party, is a tad judgmental. Because, in point of fact, female PTA über-presidents tend to be judgmental. That's the alchemy of rabidly focused women. There's no one like an obsessive, hormonal female busybody to whip a school-wide gift-wrap drive to record-setting heights ("A new gym? No, Cheryl Ann—you didn't!"). At least that's how it is in our enclaved, high-achieving whiter schools in L.A., the ones upper-middle-class parents line up frantically before dawn to get their kids into. (This phenomenon was humorously described in the *Los Angeles Times* last year in a first-person essay by a *Times* staffer. As seems typical for today's journalists, this mother didn't feel it worth noting that the school the parents were knocking elbows to get into was the affluent, 79-percent-white one within a sea of poor browns.) Indeed, the most-whispered downsides about our enclaved L.A. schools these days are the overachieving parent associations (often, if not always, powered by a team of tennis-playing stay-at-home moms). I remember one such public elementary I visited, impossible to get into anyway, whose Booster Club required 500 volunteer hours per year per family! The parental pressure is such that the poor brown schools actually start to look like attractive alternatives. At one point I found myself thinking, *Sure, if we went to this "bad" school, most of my fellow parents would be Hispanic migrants who work three jobs ... but at least I wouldn't have to deal with that crazy-ass Booster Club!*

But look—I don't wish to start another war. I don't want to sow festering seeds of class and racial discord. I come only to heal. And in that spirit, I have a modest proposal: mix it up, people. In Los Angeles, I'm happy to say, I myself have experienced zero mommy wars. (My daughter goes to a non-white-enclaved public magnet school, where she is the

JOHN CHRISTIAN

DESIGNERS & CRAFTSMEN



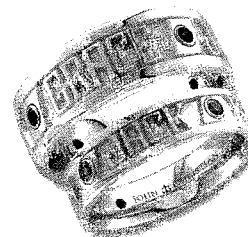
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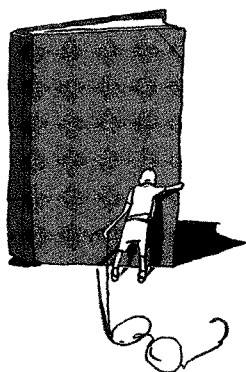
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NEW FICTION

Finds and flops

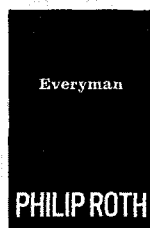
BY JOSEPH O'NEILL

Following the historical panoramas of his recent work, Roth's new novel—a novella, really—is a transfixing summary biography of a seventy-one-year-old mortal from Elizabeth, New Jersey: "He'd married three times, had mistresses and children and an interesting job where he'd been a success, but now eluding death seemed to have become the central business of his life and bodily decay his entire story."

Thus the personal history of this "average human being" is reduced almost to a surgical history: hernia trouble as a boy; a burst appendix and peritonitis in his thirties; and, in his fifties and sixties, disastrously recurrent cardiac difficulties that clutter him with six stents and a defibrillator. The vocabulary of heart disease hurled at the reader—angiogram, anterior descending artery, ejection fraction, fatal cardiac arrhythmia—is supplemented by the back braces, strokes, cancers, and migraines that plague our hero's nearest and dearest. The whole "onslaught" is horribly aggravated by his memories of carnal exaltation and bungled marriages and the beloved dead, not to mention by the awful truth that "there was nothing to be done. No fight to put up. You take it and endure it. Just give yourself over to it as long as it lasts."

Let's use a noun I've never used before: masterpiece. Whereas Roth's prize-laden recent fictions are a tad manipulative, in *Everyman* there is never any sense of a novelist trying to write a novel. Every sentence is urgent, essential, almost nonfictional. The sophistication and indirection forced on practically every writer are replaced by a straightforwardness of, yes, masterly authority. The text so thoroughly embodies, rather than displays, expertise that only after I'd finished reading did I realize that the protagonist's name had been withheld. *Everyman* is therefore that rarest of literary achievements: a novel that disappears as it progresses, leaving in one's hands only the matters of life and death it describes.

Joseph O'Neill is a novelist in New York City.



EVERYMAN
by Philip Roth
Houghton Mifflin

only blonde in her class of twenty-two.) It's not just because of the absence of Kate Spade bags or Ferragamo shoes (neither of which I could identify anyway without checking the label). I've never smarted at catty remarks from other moms, partly because those catty remarks, if made ... *would have been in Armenian. Which I do not speak.* Or Spanish. Or Tagalog, Japanese, Russian, Arabic. Ours are the old-fashioned kind of Sharks and Jets. We have so much diversity in race, you don't really notice the diversity in shoe designers. I find it quite refreshing not to know what nanothoughts the other mothers are thinking at every nanosecond. For the moment, the highlights are enough—which seem to be, to gauge by my fellow parents' smiles and nods, that we are all quite delighted, as though we've won the lottery. After all, our L.A. public school has buildings, electricity, books, and teachers who actually seem to like what they're doing. Hurray!

I agree that mommy wars are not good for any mothers, that such wars are time and effort wasted. But what are these wars really about? Susan Cheever would have it that the catfighting is actually due to suppressed rage over the age-old inequities between women and men:

Women do the lion's share—perhaps it should be called the woman's share—of the child care and household work in this country ... What worsens our predicament is that women lack core representation in our government ... There isn't much support for women who work—support like office child care, flexible hours, and reasonable maternity leaves. There isn't much support for women who stay home—like tax breaks, financial protection in case of divorce, subsidized medical care, or even licensed child care.

For mothers who can afford full-time baby nurses and \$20,000-a-year private schools? Who would no sooner partake of universal day care ("Women, unite! Universal day care!") than they would of their corner brown-skinned public elementary, where their nanny's children go? I don't think so. (Wealthy, powerful left-leaning women will never be able to admit that they have much more in common with wealthy, powerful men than they do with their poor, disenfranchised pseudo-sisters.) I do, however,

like Cheever's notion that "working and stay-at-home moms today are like the famous psychology experiment in which too many rats are put in a cage with too little food." Although I think the cage is the three square miles around 76th and Broadway, and the problem is too *much* food (if not actually Barney Greengrass eastern Gaspé smoked salmon).

More compelling for me is the take of Molly Jong-Fast, candidly self-described product of New York elite day schools, trips to Europe with the nanny, temporary withdrawal from Effexor, and, last but not least, Erica Jong and Howard Fast. (In a delightful bit of historical trivia, Jong-Fast notes that her mother was actually voted "Mother of the Year" in the early eighties. Fascinated, I had to look up whom else the Father's Day/Mother's Day Council has so honored. You might enjoy knowing that other Mothers of the Year have included Kathie Lee Gifford, Joan Rivers, Sally Jessy Raphael, Ivana Trump, and Anna Wintour—causing me, still the hardcore *Dynasty* fan, to cry out, "What, no Leona Helmsley? It's an outrage!") Jong-Fast writes about trying to be in two places at once, at work and at home: "It's the schizophrenia of modern-day motherhood. It's the schizophrenia of affluence and more pointedly the schizophrenia of feminism. Why can't we admit that life is about sacrifices?" That seems the right pairing. "Affluenza," a term coined almost thirty years ago already, describes the vague depression brought on by the stress of overwork, a superfluity of material things, low self-esteem, and the grinding pressure of always having to keep up with the Joneses. Or in this case, the Janeses—thus giving rise to affluenza's modern-day post-feminist version: "afflufemza."

Sara Nelson of *Publishers Weekly* describes her mommy wars so:

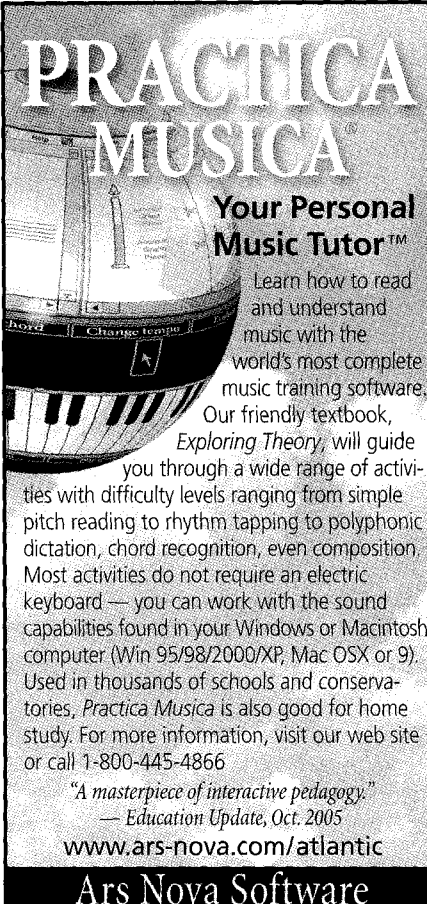
About half of the mothers of kids in Charley's class are working at least part-time. There's Maria, who designs handbags; Lauren, who works in advertising; Paulette, who writes children's books. The mother of Charley's friend Nick is an independent management consultant. And for the most part—and I gather this is unusual in the fiercely competitive world of New York private schools—there's little

conflict between the employed mothers and the ones who stay home ...

Still, there is some tension bubbling under the surface. One morning one of the stay-at-home mothers referred to herself, quite pointedly, as a "full-time mom." Those three words made my blood boil. I've been a mother every second of every day for the past ten and a half years, whether I'm researching an article or pushing a swing. Would anyone dare to suggest that a woman who worked in a factory, or as a cop or a firefighter—a woman who worked at least partly so that her children could have food and shoes and the occasional trip to Toys "R" Us—was any less a mother than my school acquaintance, who'd had the privilege to opt out of the workforce?

No, but apparently someone *would* dare to suggest that elective employment in the upper reaches of the publishing world is on a par with wage slavery and required-second-salary public-sector work. Which got me thinking how wonderfully refreshing it would be for Nelson to transfer Charley right away into a racially and socioeconomically mixed New York public school, with the children of mothers who actually are the factory workers and cops and firefighters she so admires. Even Steiner's snippy PTA über-mom at the Sulgrave Club would be invigorated by a relocation to one of the many poorer, browner Washington, D.C., schools, where she wouldn't have to rub elbows with those irritating Leslie Morgan Steiners. Then that PTA über-mom could really roll her sleeves up. Think what she could do: rebuild an entire school from the ground up—clearing out the asbestos and bringing in landscaping, violins, top-of-the-line computers. At her dogged persistence, the other parents would simply be amazed, awed, grateful. What a better world such demographic mixing would bring, for all women and children. And what a relief for the "mommy wars" moms to be finally liberated, into the wilds. Certainly all those catty remarks would be easier to restrain when the mommy close at hand is a Jamaican waitress taking the bus to her job, wearing not her forest-green Regina Rubens but the uniform of Howard Johnson. ▀

Sandra Tsing Loh is a writer and a performer whose radio commentaries appear regularly on American Public Media's Marketplace. She can also be heard on KPCC-FM, in Pasadena, California.



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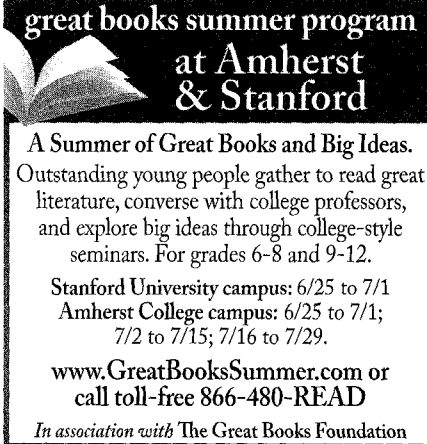
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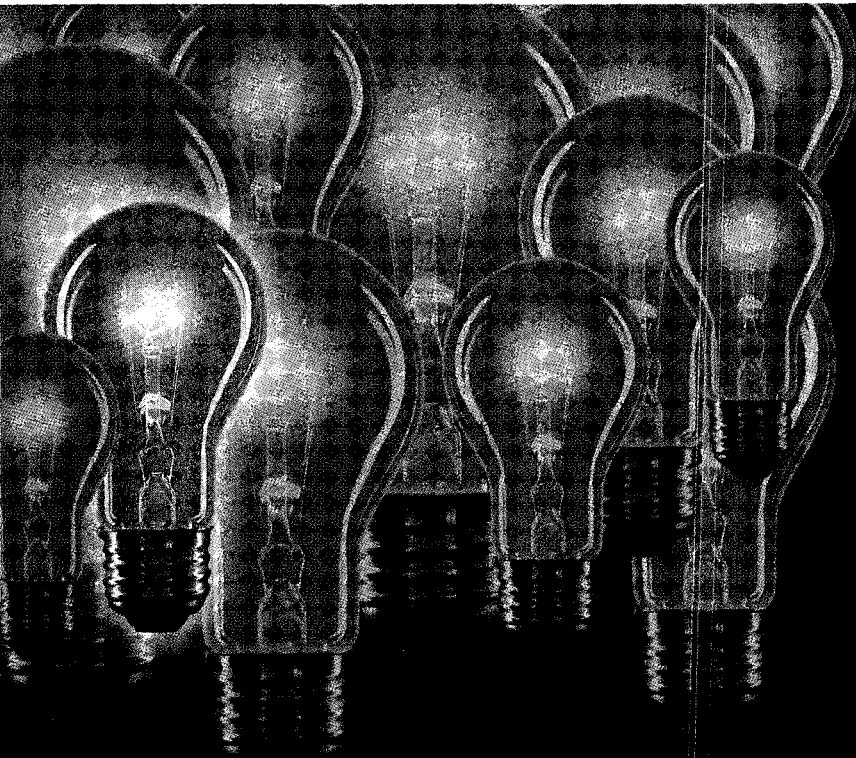
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BOOKS

Exodus

The ominous push and pull of the U.S.-Mexico border

BY MARC COOPER

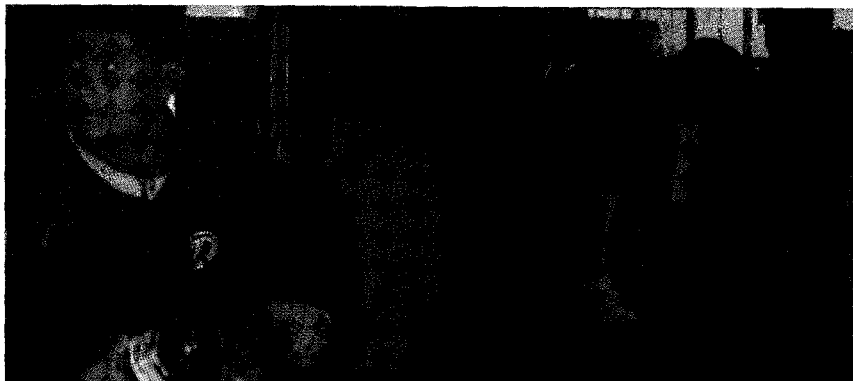
On January 6, celebrated as Three Kings Day in Mexico, the flow of border crossers heading north restarts its annual cycle. So when I arrive on the following Wednesday in the dusty, gritty Sonoran Desert town of Altar, two hours south of the border via a liver-jostling dirt road, the local merchants couldn't be more delighted. I have been to Altar before. And on this trip, I can readily agree with the local street entrepreneurs and hustlers that this year's crossing season, barely in its third day, looks to be as bountiful and profitable as ever—in spite of an also cyclical uproar, north of the border, over illegal immigration. Once an anonymous bus stop on Mexico's Route 2, Altar—a diesel-marinated ten-block grid of around 10,000 people—has become the primary staging area for Mexican migrants before they make their desperate bounce across the border. And the town's entire commercial life rests on this singular enterprise.

All around the central plaza that skirts the butternut-colored colonial-era church, small groups—mostly men, mostly young, mostly dressed in dark clothing and running shoes, though there are also some women with babies in their arms—await contact with the *coyote* or *pollero* who has promised to push them through a treacherous but in many ways invisible membrane from which they will emerge, almost magically, on the other side as our carpenters, gardeners, waiters, pickers, pluckers, and nannies. The going rate, door-to-door, from the fields of Veracruz or Oaxaca to the orange orchards of Florida or to a Brentwood kitchen: about \$1,500. No need, even, to pay it all in advance: installments, with interest, will be drawn from future income.

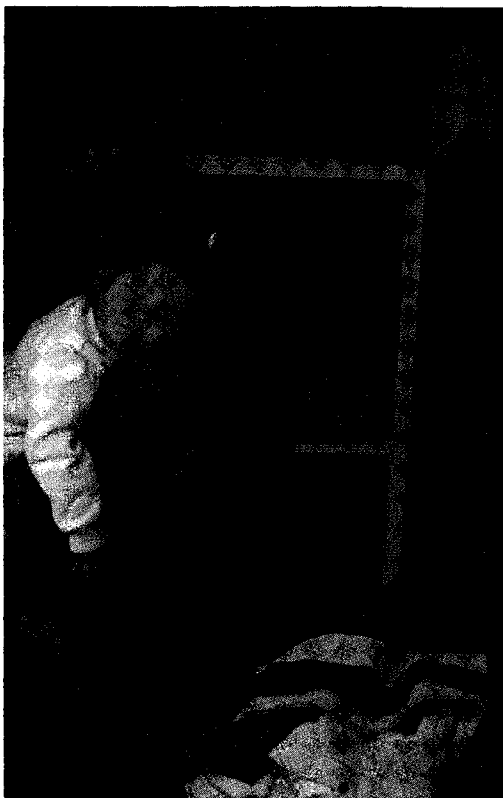
On the streets adjoining the plaza, tiny, airless shops selling phone cards and converting currency are doing brisk business, as are the occasional youth gangs, who find few other places

in Mexico where so many people are walking around with so much folding money in their pockets. Other Mexican migrants fleeing the impoverished south operate a warren of kiosks and stands, offering up for sale everything needed to ease the perilous crossing ahead: plastic gallon jugs of water; plastic baggies of combs, toothbrushes, aspirin tablets, and lip balm; dark jeans; black windbreakers; hooded sweatshirts; athletic shoes; baseball caps; bandanas; backpacks; and the black woolen ski masks favored by the salaried guides who lead the walkers across the desert. Also for sale are black plastic trash bags—\$3 each—to be wrapped around the body; they're said to foil the heat-seeking sensors that the U.S. Border Patrol and the Department of Homeland Security have stitched into the other side of *la linea*. One Oaxacan vendor shows off a black cap with an embroidered green cannabis leaf. "They buy this one a lot," he says. "I tell them I don't think it's the best one to wear."

A few yards away, the Red Cross has just opened its first-aid trailer for this year's season, and its advice is also readily spurned. "I tell them that they run a great risk," says uniformed paramedic Amado Arellano. He even shows



*Top: preparing for the journey in Altar.
Bottom: a young mother with her child
in a "guest house."*



**DOWN BY THE RIVER:
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AND FAMILY**

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*by Congressman J. D. Hayworth
with Joseph J. Eule
introduction by Sean Hannity*
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them a colorful but macabre wall map—provided by the Tucson-based Humane Borders group—that marks every spot where a migrant has died in the desert. Hundreds of fatal red dots cluster just above the border. “We try to tell them not to go,” he says. “But no one listens. The necessity is too great.” Right beside the medical trailer snakes a line—sometimes twenty or thirty vehicles long—of battered windowless ten-seater vans, their seats torn out and replaced with benches that allow twenty-seven, even thirty, passengers to be crammed in. These shuttle operations—charging an average of \$10 a head—are some of the more lucrative businesses in Altar, and their overloaded vans rumble up the same rocky road I’ve just come

down. The destination of “Sasabe” is written with washable white marker on the sides of the vans. They might be more honestly labeled “California” or “North Carolina” or “Texas,” as no sane person would voluntarily travel to the grim, unpaved Mexican border hamlet of Sasabe—except to use it as a location for a Robert Rodriguez movie or, more likely, as the final stepping stone over the line. By midday, the vans are departing with the perpetual rhythm of Disneyland people-carriers zipping into the Haunted House. Approximately 40,000 migrants per month make this trip through and out of Altar.

Accompanied by Jorge Solchaga, a thirty-eight-year-old diplomat who works with the Mexican consulate in Phoenix,

I walk through a nameless tortilla shop on a side street off the plaza, out its back door, and into a brick-and-cement courtyard teeming with people getting ready to cross. This is one of Altar’s countless unregulated and ill-named “guest houses”—tenement flops that offer nothing except a body-sized patch of floor for \$5 or \$6 a night. On one side of the cramped courtyard, workmen plaster together an add-on to the tenement; its owners clearly realize that they are part of a growth industry. A rickety iron staircase leads us to some second-floor lodgings, a bare twenty-by-twenty-foot room in which about fifty people have put down their sleeping mats and backpacks.

In the courtyard once more, Solchaga spots a dark-skinned girl with a nursing-age infant in her lap. She stares at the ground as Solchaga gently warns her that she is about to put her life and that of her child at risk. When he presses her on the dangers, she barely nods. Almost inaudibly she says that she’s twenty, but she looks five years younger and somewhat terrified. However, the die is cast. She’s given up everything back home and will be heading out into a new world within a few minutes. “Make sure your husband carries three extra gallons of water for you, you hear?” Solchaga says, nodding to the man sitting behind her. As we exit the flop, Solchaga tells me that the blank look in that girl’s eyes will surely haunt him. One of his jobs at the consulate is to process the deaths of Mexicans in the United States. Three years ago in Altar, he tells me, he warned another nursing mother not to make the crossing, and less than a week later, when a call came in to his Arizona office requesting him to help identify a “fatality” that had been found in the desert, he recognized the same young woman. “This is my job, and I am used to it,” he says. Last year he processed the deaths of 219 Mexicans in the Phoenix area; some were migrants who had wandered in the desert for eight or nine days before their souls and bodies burned out. “It’s the young women I never forget,” he says, shrugging his shoulders.

JORGE SOLCHAGA

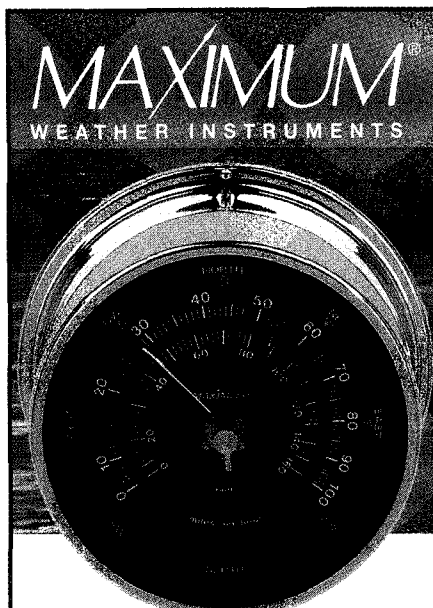
The night before my trip to Altar, I had dinner with the Tucson-based journalist Charles Bowden, author of more than fifteen books, most of them set along the border. In perhaps his most acclaimed work, *Down by the River*, certainly a must-read for anyone researching the border, Bowden describes the poverty that swamps even the more prosperous Mexican border cities and that relentlessly churns the human flow northward. "Over there," he writes of Ciudad Juárez, just across from El Paso, Texas,

most of the streets are unpaved, two thirds of the houses lack any sewage connection. At least 200,000 people in the city live as squatters ... At least 35,000 more poor people descend on Juárez each year. Or sixty thousand, no one is sure. They take jobs at \$3 to \$5 a day that cannot sustain them.

When they realize that it's only the width of a river—or a twelve-foot wall, or three strands of cattle wire, or a three-day walk, for that matter—that separates them from a First World economy and some reasonable chance at a future, they push north. "The Mexican border is the only place," Bowden writes, "where the cyberspace world of a major economy rubs up against a world of raw sewage and mud huts. The world of mud is failing to sustain its people."

Writing *Down by the River* with a feverish intensity, stringing his phrasings out like bursts of angry jazz, Bowden describes the borderlands as a violent netherworld where both Mexico and the United States can flaunt their most unappealing aspects. Concentrating on the front line of the endless and fruitless war on drugs, he captures the barbaric and bloody energy generated when—and where—the north's insatiable pull for drugs meets the coke, cash, and corruption pushing up from the south. For Bowden, the same inexorable law of supply and demand explains the flow of human cargo—of illegal immigrants.

With an estimated 11-to-1 manufacturing wage differential between the two countries (some experts put the agricultural wage gap at twice that), why is anyone shocked by what's happening? "You're looking at the biggest story of our lives," Bowden told me over



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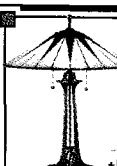
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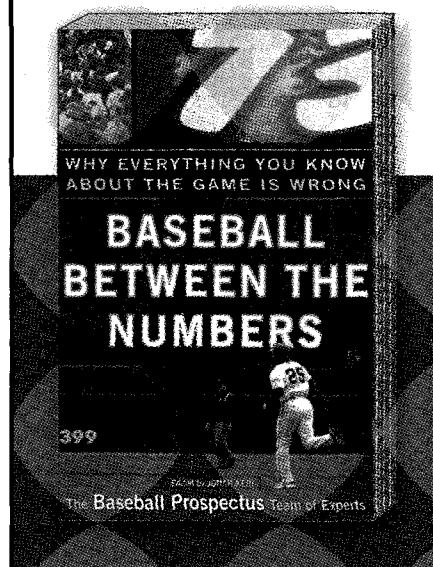
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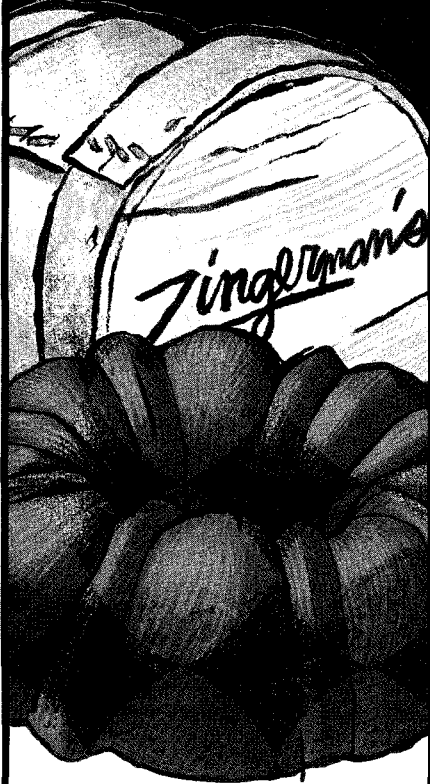
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dinner. "This is the largest cross-border human migration in history." Though rarely, if ever, posed in those terms, the staggering numbers tend to bolster Bowden's sweeping vision. Something like 15 million to 20 million migrants have crossed into the United States over the last two decades. An equal number are expected to do so in the next twenty years. "People aren't coming here as much as they are leaving a cratered economy," Bowden said. "The only way you'll stop Mexicans coming to the U.S. is if you lower American wages to the same level as Vietnam. Someone worth maybe \$100 a month in Mexico who comes to the U.S. becomes a human ATM machine. McCain-Kennedy, Kyl-Cornyn?" he said, referring to the hodge-podge of current immigration-reform proposals. "It's all bullshit. What we're seeing is something right out of the Bible. This is an exodus."

That's certainly the deep emotional impression I come away with as Solchaga and I depart Altar. An hour up the road back toward the border, all vehicles are stopped at a checkpoint run by Mexico's orange-and-blue-uniformed Grupo Beta. Created last decade under U.S. pressure and with some American assistance, the Beta teams were intended to be elite Mexican immigration police that would work in tandem with the U.S. Border Patrol on the other side, to stanch the human flow. Then reality intervened. The Beta teams instead went into business, running their own lucrative shakedown schemes on the migrants. A few years ago, the Mexican government simply disarmed the Grupo Beta and reorganized it into a sort of community-assistance force for the migrants—seemingly a mix between the Automobile Club and the Eagle Scouts.

On our way up from Altar to the Beta checkpoint called El Tortugo, Solchaga and I count thirty-one vans coming the other way. Something like 900 crossers have been delivered to the border in the previous hour. Now, at the Grupo Beta roadblock, the vans coming behind us are arriving every three or four minutes. As each one arrives, two Beta officers unload the passengers and gather them by the side of the road for

a short lecture—sometimes two or three vans' worth at a time. "However long the *pollero* told you it will take, it will take longer," says officer Julio Cesar Cancino. "If they told you it will be a two- or three-day walk, they lied. It will take longer." He advises them, in the event they get scattered, to look for the blue flags that demark water stations set up by American religious activists. Or to look for the red lights on the radio towers on the Mexican side of the border. "Whatever you do, don't run. The *migra*," he says, referring to the Border Patrol in Mexican slang, "isn't there only to arrest you, but also to help you. If you're in trouble, if you're lost and out of water, or if your *pollero* abandons you, go to them for help. But don't run. And don't reach for your pockets."

Like the girl that Solchaga had warned earlier in the day, these groups of crossers don't quite know what to make of this advice. They don't know whether to trust fellow Mexicans in uniform. Isn't endemic corruption one of the reasons they're leaving Mexico, after all? They shuffle their feet and stare down at the ground, or off into the middle distance, and don't look the Grupo Beta officers in the eye. When asked, they quietly tick off their home states: Oaxaca, Veracruz, Puebla, Chiapas, Michoacán. And they aren't shy about their destinations: Los Angeles, Phoenix, Houston, San Bernardino, Portland, New Jersey. Bowden is right. An exodus, indeed.

Rural, lightly educated, some of them indigenous people who speak only broken Spanish, they wouldn't be able to tell a McCain from a McGillicutty. They don't know, nor do they care, how much the Border Patrol has been reinforced in the past decade, how many millions have been spent in the past five years on new border fences, sensors, stadium lighting, infrared scopes, remote-control cameras, Black Hawk helicopters, and even unmanned aerial drones that will track them—or at least will try. (Almost \$430 million has been invested since 1997 in border technology systems. But a recent audit by the Department of Homeland Security estimated that fewer than 1 percent of the sensor alerts have led to arrests. Most of

the alarms are set off by passing trains and cows, producing a massive waste of time. Radar systems that are used to find tunnels under border walls have proved just as ineffective. The longest known tunnel—2,400 feet, near San Diego—was discovered, in late January, because of a tip, not technology.) What difference does it make if this or that House committee has marked up one or another bill, or if Lou Dobbs is back on CNN bloviating about “broken borders,” or if some gringos calling themselves Minutemen have camped out in lawn chairs on the other side? All the migrants know is that the young man sitting with them in the van has vowed to get them to the promised land, and that’s where they’re going. They’re aware that the next three or four or more days will be tough—though few know just how tough. But the choice is, maybe, between working a cornfield for \$4 a day in the south or picking grapes in the north for \$60 or \$70. By nightfall, all of the travelers will be moving across the border. The Grupo Beta officers, however, will be withdrawing. As has always been the case, the migrants will be on their own after dusk. “We leave at dark,” Officer Cancino tells me. He points to the myriad bullet holes in the twisted road sign reading EL TORTUGO. “After that, it’s way too dangerous.”

Making the crossing ever more dangerous seems to be about the only tangible result of U.S. border policy in the past decade. In 1994, the Clinton administration—fearing the political repercussions after the anti-immigrant Proposition 187 passed in California—implemented a “prevention through deterrence” border program. One after another, the traditional urban crossing points, near San Diego, Nogales, and El Paso, were simply blockaded and more or less shut down. Military-sounding campaigns like Operation Gatekeeper, Operation Hold-the-Line, Operation Safeguard, and Operation Rio Grande didn’t do much to keep the migrants out of the United States. But driving them away from border cities got them—for a while, at least—out of the news. Historic and decades-old human streams were rerouted from California

and Texas and funneled into the relatively unpopulated, inhospitable terrain along the Arizona border. Out of sight. Out of mind. Again, for a time.

No one was actually deterred, but more people died. Since the early 1990s, whatever the official policy, the Border Patrol has made about a million “apprehensions” per year (the number of detainees this past year was almost identical to that of 1993). And every year about half as many people—500,000 or so—elude arrest and make it across. But in 1994, the year of the Clinton clampdown, a total of twenty-three migrants died attempting passage. That number climbed to average 300 a year in the late 1990s and has topped 400 annually since 2000. Last year’s toll set a new record: nearly 500, more than half of them in south-central Arizona.

At the same time that the United States was blocking the border arteries, its trade policies were only increasing the pressure on Mexicans to leave their country. Before the 1993 passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement, only about 2.5 million undocumented Mexicans were living in the United States. Since then, by conservative estimates, the number has more than doubled. With all barriers dropped on the inflow of cheap American agricultural products, over a million Mexican subsistence farmers have been wiped out, and left with no choice but to head north. And the NAFTA boom for Mexican industrial workers, promised by the Clinton administration, never materialized. Over the past decade, wages for Mexican factory workers have actually declined.

The single most compelling, lucid, and lyrical contemporary account of the absurdity of U.S. border policy is Luis Alberto Urrea’s *Devil’s Highway*, a 2005 Pulitzer finalist for general nonfiction. Urrea writes with the clarity of a world-class journalist, the sensibilities of a poet, and the insight of a Mexican born in the purgatory of Tijuana but raised and educated in the United States. His terrifying and meticulously researched narrative reconstructs the tragic trek of twenty-six men, mostly Veracruz subsistence farmers, who in May 2001 tried to cross into southern Arizona along the legendary and brutal patch known as the Devil’s

NEW FICTION

Finds and flops

BY ELIZABETH JUDD

Julia Glass’s winning second novel serves as a spirited, 500-page refutation of minimalism. When Greenie Duquette laments the potential complications of an extramarital affair, a friend insists, “Darling, *simple* is the childish prayer on everyone’s lips.” With a contrarian’s love of lavishness, Glass merrily includes everything from digressions on the glories of Dr. Seuss to descriptions of the rich, cholesterol-laden desserts Greenie concocts to diatribes against the flow of antibacterial soaps into streams and oceans and the resulting proliferation of supergerms. A figurative painter whose equally expansive *Three Junes* took the National Book Award for fiction in 2002, Glass clearly embraces a sprawling messiness that harks back to Trollope and Tolstoy.

Like her predecessors, she finds inspiration in the vicissitudes of family strife. Greenie, a successful pastry chef with a precocious four-year-old son, leaves Greenwich Village and her tepid husband to work for the flamboyant governor of New Mexico, a man used to throwing “his grand flirtatious self in every direction.” At times Glass’s tapestry feels soap-operatic (not one but two peripheral characters seek to adopt internationally, and there is an improbable number of love affairs, even for the hormone-driven realm of contemporary fiction), but her unflagging intelligence invariably asserts itself as a corrective. The crucible for these harried urbanites is 9/11, which has somewhat tediously become the default bolt from the blue, causing the protagonists in any number of recent novels to rethink their personal situations. But watching Glass sort out a dozen intersecting story lines is never less than fascinating. In keeping with her nineteenth-century influences, she resolves all loose ends, treating everyone with remarkable evenhandedness in her bustling, congenial world.

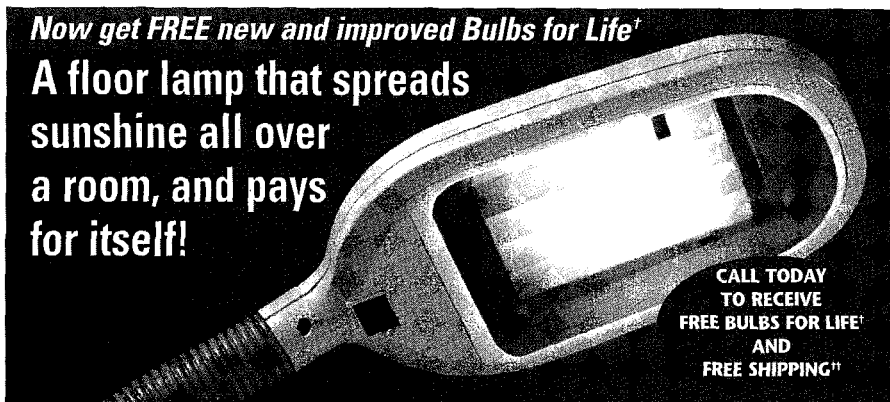
Elizabeth Judd is a writer in Washington, D.C.



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Highway. Led astray by three confused and frightened guides, fourteen of them—who came to be known as the Yuma 14—perished in the heat. The twelve survivors were found in a grotesque state, as if they were being broiled. Many of the group's members had passed through Altar; one of their teenage guides hailed from Sasabe. Consular official Jorge Solchaga told me he spent days "camped out" in the Pima County coroner's office, overseeing the gruesome task of identifying the sun-charred corpses and arranging for their shipment back to Mexico. "They are embalmed, then placed in a cloth-covered wooden casket," Urrea writes of the processing of the recovered bodies of Mexican migrants.

This undertaking costs \$650. If they are to be flown home, the "air-tray" to hold the casket costs an extra \$50. The Mexican consulates pay for the embalming, and other parties—sometimes the governments of the walkers' home states—pay for the flights. For more than 80 percent of the dead, it is the most expensive gift they have ever gotten.

The same sense of foreboding inevitability that marks Bowden's attitude pervades Urrea's storytelling. In his earlier and equally luminous nonfiction work *By the Lake of Sleeping Children*, Urrea takes us into the stinking, rotting heart of the Tijuana municipal dump. Here an entire community, dedicated to squeezing a living out of the rubbish, has mushroomed. On one storm-ravaged day, the dump floods and the washing walls of water erode the surrounding banks. Improvised children's coffins, made of cardboard boxes, slide loose and break apart, and hungry seagulls pick away at the remains. The lake of sleeping children. Immersed knee-deep in this ghastly stew, Urrea taunts us:

Proposition 187? A new Berlin Wall at the border? California citizen identification cards? ... You think they're going to work? You think they can possibly work? Swim in this lake for a minute, then tell me you can keep these people on its shore. Jump in—you own it: it's Lake Nafta.

In *The Devil's Highway*, Urrea cuts through the prevailing mythologies surrounding the border and reveals,

unsentimentally but with compassion, how a simple political boundary manages to scramble the basic humanity of all whose lives it divides and defines. He shows enormous sympathy for the world-weary Border Patrol agents who delight in calling their prey “tonks”—the sound made by a government-issue flashlight crashing on a skull—but who will later, at their own personal expense, build a rescue beacon to save the lives of future tonks. The twelve Mexican survivors of the doomed crossing party, meanwhile, are described as not only happy to be alive but also rather relishing the perks and comforts offered by the U.S. government in exchange for their cooperation in the criminal case against one of their hapless guides:

The survivors were suddenly paid professional narrators. At the beginning of their federal jobs, they were paid in room and board. They got cheap shoes and pants. T-shirts. As they sang, they learned they could get job advancement. Even a substantial raise. Like all good bards, they embellished and expanded their narratives ... It was the new millennium's edition of the American Dream.

While Urrea's sympathies are clearly with the walkers, he refuses to make martyrs of them, just as he balks at demonizing their pursuers. Instead, he casts them all in the drama of a global economy whose ominous pushes and pulls defy the logic of laws, policies, and even climate. What wasn't wholly predictable about the deaths of the Yuma 14? The walkers were consumed at the onset of what is now known as the yearly “death season”—May through July, when Arizona temperatures float in the triple digits. Urrea writes:

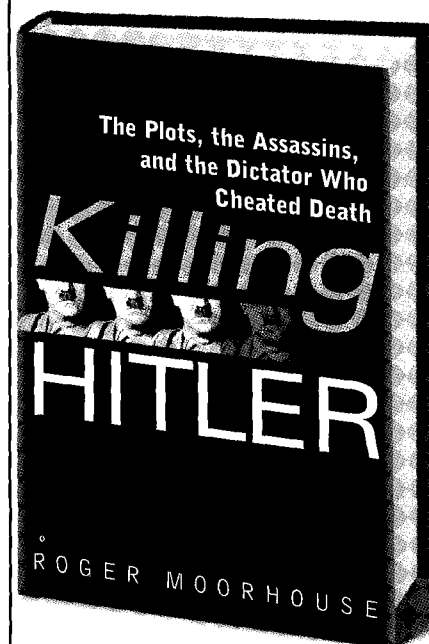
It is then that lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, oranges, strawberries are all ready to be picked. Arkansas chickens are ready to be plucked. Cows are waiting in Iowa and Nebraska to be ground into hamburger, and grills are ready in McDonald's and Burger King and Wendy's and Taco Bell for the ground meat to be cooked. KFC is waiting for its Mexican-plucked, Mexican-slaughtered chickens to be fried by Mexicans. And the western desert is waiting, too—its temperatures soaring, a fryer in its own right.

The deaths of the Yuma 14, coming at a time when migrant fatalities were spiking, brought the border issue back into public view—at least for those who cared to notice at all. These “unintended consequences” of the Clinton-era lock-down—grisly border deaths and no letup in crossings, and all the bad publicity thereof—sparked some transitory hope that an obsolete policy of denial would be replaced by something more pragmatic. In early 2001, newly elected Presidents Bush and Fox publicly hinted that some grand, historic immigration compromise was in the making. In the summer of 2001, Mexico's then-Foreign Minister Jorge Castaneda told me and others that he was confidently pushing for the “whole enchilada”—an agreement that would provide a legal channel for Mexican guest workers and that would also “normalize” the millions of Mexicans already working and living in the United States without legal status.

September 11 blew away that early optimism, and reforming immigration and border policies once again became politically taboo. Until January 2004, that is, when President Bush, his eye cast on a growing Latino electorate and his administration under pressure from a worker-starved business lobby, rekindled the debate by again publicly calling for a guest-worker deal and by strongly suggesting that something should be done to legalize those already here. An odd-bedfellows coalition stretching from John McCain to Ted Kennedy, from the Chamber of Commerce to the AFL-CIO, was in place to support the reform call. They all agreed that control of the border was imperative. But that could realistically be achieved, they argued, only if future migrants could enter legally, and if the “illegals” already here could be recognized, perhaps pay a fine, and then be given formal papers.

The initiative in the political fight, however, was taken by the reactionary flank of Bush's own party. No way were they going to go along with what they called an “amnesty” for the illegals already here, nor let the doors be flung open to even more Mexican immigrants. The rise of the Minutemen, the blasts of openly xenophobic AM talk radio even in cosmopolitan outposts

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NEW FICTION

A CLOSE READ

What makes good writing good

BY CHRISTINA SCHWARZ



"More and more toast, slice after slice, wholewheat and heavy and lavish with butter—even Beth chews and swallows and reaches for more until soon a whole loaf has, like Philip, vanished. Crumbs lie scattered over three black laps and the pine tabletop and the blue-tiled floor at their feet, and still they are hungry. People don't stock groceries with such ravenous emergencies in mind, so when their collective desires shift to the sweet they do not have on hand the chocolate ice cream, vanilla cakes, muffins flecked with raisins, cookies stuffed with jam, also butter tarts, also cinnamon rolls, that they crave. Even Beth lusts after sugar despite considering sugar, like coffee, ruinous."

—from **Luck**, by Joan Barfoot (Carroll & Graf)

Barfoot's writing is exuberant, packed with active verbs. Beth doesn't merely eat; she "chews and swallows and reaches." The author's use of past participles, verbs transformed into adjectives, peps up her list of sweets: "muffins flecked with raisins, cookies stuffed with jam." In general, she keeps her adjectives basic and unqualified, giving them the boldness of primary colors or whole notes: "black," "pine," "blue-tiled," "chocolate," "vanilla," "butter," "cinnamon." Her repetition of "more and more," "slice after slice," and "wholewheat" and "whole," her plethora of "and"s in the first sentence, her unconventional repetition of the word "also" in the penultimate sentence—they all

mimic the abundance she describes, as does her use of lists in every sentence but the last. She composes these with an admirable ear, artfully grouping similar structures but often shifting those structures so that the effect is both lavish—to borrow one of her pleasing words—and lively. More subtly, Barfoot links the lavish loaf and the vanished Philip by using words similar in sound, and calls attention to the ties among "lust," "sugar," and "ruinous" in the final sentence by repeating the letter "u." "Ruinous" also echoes "ravenous," a transferred epithet that is disconcerting syntactically, just as the loss of Philip is existentially.

Christina Schwarz is the author of the novels *Drowning Ruth* and *All Is Vanity*.

like Los Angeles, the emergence of a fiercely anti-immigrant fringe House caucus led by Colorado Congressman Tom Tancredo, sounded a new border war. Bush, fearing a split among his own base, quietly retreated on the issue, and left the field wide open for a nativist resurgence.

While the market features no current pro-immigration manifesto, a panoply of books are now cashing in on the restrictionist fever. Jon E. Dougherty's *Illegals: The Imminent Threat Posed by Our Unsecured U.S.-Mexico Border* perfectly reproduces the Minuteman meme that America is quickly being consumed by Mexico, which secretly plans a "*reconquista*," the re-incorporation of the Southwest into Mexico. Dougherty even puts forward the novel notion that America isn't really a country of immigrants. "Despite ethnic diversity," he writes,

most Americans can trace their roots to America, and America alone, for several generations. We've never lived anywhere else. Our parents have never lived anywhere else. Many of our grandparents didn't, either. As such, most of us have deep cultural, spiritual and social ties to this nation—despite a desire by certain quarters to hyphenate us along ethnic lines.

One thing Dougherty's got right, even if he overdramatizes it, is that the historic migration we are witnessing is radically remaking American culture, producing what some call, in a new twist on an old term, a "Los Angelization" of the country. More and more neighborhoods, even some entire towns, are now predominantly Spanish-speaking. Other areas are officially bilingual. In a number of big cities—starting with Los Angeles—some of the highest-rated radio shows and TV news programs are Spanish-language.

Salsa replaces ketchup as our favorite condiment. More-densely immigrant neighborhoods—especially if the immigrants are low-paid and undocumented—produce pockets of deep poverty, and of crime. A ZIP code in California's Central Valley—brimming with predominantly Mixtec field workers—houses more people living in concentrated poverty than any other in the country. Another precinct, near downtown Los Angeles and home to tens of thousands of Salvadorans, is one of the most crowded neighborhoods in America and is ravaged by drugs.

Illegal immigrants contribute work, pay a share of taxes (which can't be refunded), and stimulate consumerism. They also pressure and overload hospitals, schools, and jails, something that local governments—unreimbursed, for the most part, by a federal government that closes its eyes to these realities—can't afford. Liberals don't know whether to celebrate this diversity or to minimize it for fear of a backlash. Conservatives, for the most part, have made up their minds—especially those who live closest to the border, for whom the migratory traffic is a daily reality that flattens the immediate border environment, overruns local communities, tramples fields and fences, and creates a general sense of insecurity.

"Such realities are difficult to accept for Americans ... who live along the border regions and are fed up with the invasion of immigrants and the associated violence," Dougherty writes.

They're tired of the costs. They're tired of the threats. They're tired of the trash. They're tired of the drugs. They're tired of being tired of it all. But most of all, they're tired of being ignored by politicians, law enforcement, bureaucrats and policymakers—most of whom criticize any effort citizens make to take care of the problem themselves.

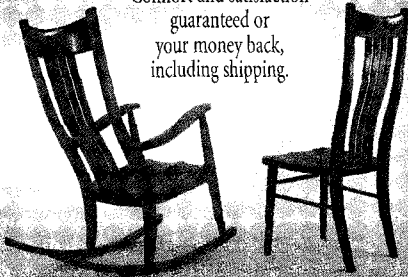
For those who are fed up enough to dial 1-800-MINUTEMEN, Arizona Republican Congressman J. D. Hayworth has now weighed in with his own bookful of border and immigration remedies, titled *Whatever It Takes: Illegal Immigration, Border Security, and the War on Terror*. It is a perfect specimen

of modern partisan political pamphleteering, in which Hayworth not only slams what he calls "lettuce liberals" (those who warn that food prices would soar if higher wages brought Americans back into farm labor) but also demands that George W. Bush apologize for having, last year, called the Minutemen "vigilantes." Hayworth proffers a long list of draconian solutions: a new "Americanism" movement to make English the official language, military troops on the border, a \$4 billion to \$8 billion wall running from the Pacific to the Gulf Coast, more detention centers to house captured illegal crossers, repeal of U.S. citizenship for future "anchor babies" (children whose birth on U.S. soil makes them citizens and anchors their families in the United States), the expulsion of Mexican diplomats who criticize American border policy, the hiring of 10,000 new work-site enforcement agents to arrest violators, and even a temporary but renewable three-year ban on legal immigration from Mexico.

This final, punitive measure, Hayworth argues, would "create a domestic constituency in Mexico demanding that the Mexican government cooperate with the United States on illegal immigration." The logic here, if any, is a bit tough to follow. How would clamping the lid down tighter on an already overflowing economic pressure cooker do anything except create more instability, more social conflict, and probably even more illegal immigration? (The last time Mexico experienced a revolution, 10 percent of its population wound up in the United States.) Questions of that sort are probably of little interest to Hayworth, whose policy notions seem derived more from pandering to his own domestic constituency than from facing up to complex issues with global implications. He offers no advice on what to do about the 12 million illegals already living in the United States. And he makes the preposterous statement that "free markets are incompatible with illegal immigration," when, in fact, the flow into the United States is almost exclusively about an open market for jobs. Borders that are open to the free flow of capital are going to be

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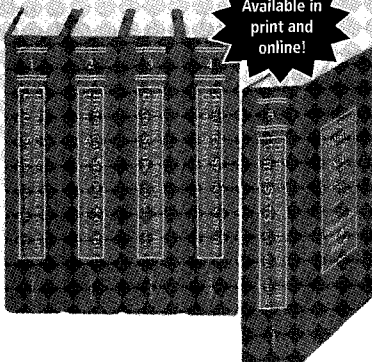
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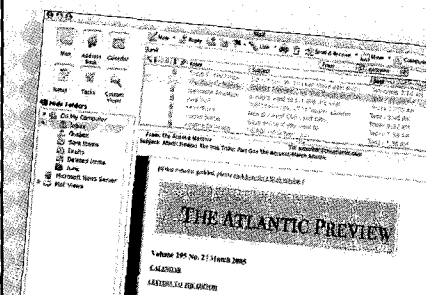
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readily crossed by job seekers (human capital), with or without visas.

Nevertheless, Hayworth's mad-as-hell approach now dominates the congressional debate. Last winter, his House colleague James Sensenbrenner pushed through a landmark bill that mandates the construction of 700 more miles of border walls and makes illegally entering or residing in the country a felony (it's currently only a civil violation). Sensenbrenner's measure—if matched by the Senate—would also permit felony prosecution for any American who in any way assists or hires an illegal, and would thereby make thousands of American businesses, housewives, and gardening enthusiasts guilty of high crimes.

This spring, the Senate is expected to craft its own border-reform package, one likely to be somewhat more in touch with reality than the House measure. But virtually no one involved in the debate is willing to guess what a final conference package will look like. Not willing, because they know that for some decades now, our border and immigration policy has reflected only our internal fears and fancies, and has in no significant way been informed by the realities on the ground. The border between the United States and Mexico, much more than a mere political boundary, is the volatile meeting point of economic and social tectonic plates. Legislating against the resulting earthquakes makes little difference.

One thing is for certain: those battered vans in Altar will continue to load up every afternoon, and every evening, their human cargo will find a way across the border. If the migrants run into some new Sensenbrenner wall, they will simply go around it. Or over it. Or under it. Mexicans will show as much ingenuity in getting into the United States as Americans would in breaking into British Columbia if the Canadian minimum wage were \$70 an hour. "Nothing really changes here," Charles Bowden said to me, as a chill night descended on the Tucson desert. "When people ask me what the solution will eventually be here, I say, 'This is it.'" ■

Marc Cooper is a contributing editor of The Nation and a senior fellow at the Institute for Justice and Journalism at the USC Annenberg School for Communication.

BOOKS

Blood for No Oil!

A new manifesto finds a model in the Truman era for returning liberals to political centrality in America. But the comparison is hopelessly inexact

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

Whether intentionally or not, Peter Beinart sets out to challenge and annoy the American Left from the first three words of his title. “The good fight” is a nostalgic, hymnal term that the mixed bag of remaining “progressives” still reserve very much for themselves; it is most commonly used to invoke the Spanish Civil War and, in particular, those Americans who went, under the ostensible banner of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion but under the effective command of the Comintern, to take part in it. And as one looks back on it now, this episode of heroism and betrayal is remarkable for one thing above all: it represents the only time in modern history that American radicals were in favor of, or had a direct hand in, any “foreign entanglement.” Their highest moral exemplar, as badly as it ended, is in fact the great exception that violates their rule.

Seeing the title, I had hoped that Beinart would open with a challenge to the myth of “premature anti-fascism” and would point out that otherwise during that period the American Left had made common cause with the isolationists and even, for a while, with the idea of a formal military pact between Stalin and Hitler. Trace elements of this mentality survive to our own day: both Gore Vidal and Patrick J. Buchanan still revere the figure of Charles Lindbergh, whose influence was so inadequately captured, from the traditionally wearisome New Jersey Jewish keyhole, in Philip Roth’s *Plot Against America*. (The moving spirit of today’s AntiWar.com, a preening

figure named Justin Raimondo, is also given to paeans in favor of Lindbergh’s charismatic manliness and authority.)

Instead, Beinart opens the story with the Henry Wallace campaign of 1948—the setting of another Philip Roth novel, this time *I Married a Communist*. In that year, a strategic majority of the American Left worked hard for a man who would have given Eastern Europe to Stalin (and perhaps some of Western Europe, too) with the same insouciance that—until Stalin himself had been attacked—it had allowed the region to be given to Hitler. Had the Wallace campaign done as well as had been predicted, the chief domestic effect would have been to throw the election to Thomas Dewey. But as it was, the era of the tough-

minded “Cold War liberal” had begun. Beinart’s book locates the crucial step in this evolution at the founding of Americans for Democratic Action, or ADA, in the Willard Hotel in Washington in January 1947. Present for this event were Hubert Humphrey, Walter Reuther,

Eleanor Roosevelt, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., David Dubinsky, and—Beinart’s personal hero—Reinhold Niebuhr.

It is easy to summarize what attracts Beinart to this group: in a breathtaking moment of reactionary parochialism and insularity, Henry Wallace had declared against Marshall Aid for Europe but supposedly in favor of civil rights and the rights of labor. By assembling a distinguished group that endorsed Marshall Aid and had seen through communism, but that took a forward position on New Deal programs and the emancipation of black Americans, the ADA had echoed Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, who in the Willard Hotel almost a century earlier had “sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat.” Beinart gives due credit to the unjustly forgotten Bayard Rustin, who was perhaps the true genius of the civil-rights and democratic-socialist movements, but his emphasis on Niebuhr is what truly informs the book, because this solemn old Protestant theologian provided a constant warning against American hubris.

Beinart’s aim is to refashion this tradition for the war against jihadism, and



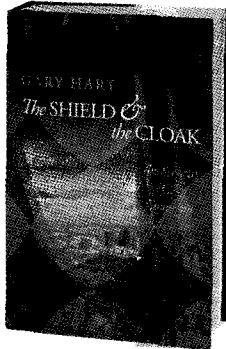
THE GOOD FIGHT:
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to reposition American liberals as the friends of democracy and equality at home and abroad. The Truman administration presents a rough pattern of what he admires, from its desegregation of the U.S. armed forces to its willingness to confront communism in Greece, Turkey, and Korea while relying, where it could, on local democratic forces rather than on regional oligarchies. He seeks to represent the upward curve of domestic reform, especially the amazing burgeoning of the civil-rights movement, as intersecting nicely with "containment" overseas and the demonstrated willingness to employ force—even annihilating thermonuclear force—as well. Result: prosperity at home and "peace through strength" abroad.

This retrospective optimism is in many ways too neat. In the first place, the Allied victors in 1945 had decided to leave fascist despotism in place in Spain and Portugal, and to recruit Hitler's spies and rocket scientists, from

the while dragging his feet on the only idea whose time actually *had* come: Rustin's beautiful scheme for a march on Washington. There's no mystery about the rise of the New Left. John F. Kennedy was more of a sellout in terms of the ADA's guiding principles than even the most credulous liberal should have been prepared to accept.

This does not excuse those who reverted to post-Vietnam isolationism and who regarded the later advent of the "KKK" (the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, and the Khalq faction of Stalinism in Afghanistan) as nothing more than an invitation for America to "come home." And it has been demonstrated in more than one case that a crisis ducked by liberals will recur as an opportunity taken, or even seized, by conservatives. Without the American Right (and "vital center") there might have been no Shah or Somoza to be overthrown in the first instance. Easy propaganda points can

Beinart's aim is to refashion the tradition of tough-minded Cold War liberalism for the war against jihadism. This retrospective optimism is in many ways too neat.

Reinhard Gehlen to Werner von Braun, into a new "national-security state." In the second place, there were always leftists, notably I. F. Stone, who understood that the Wallace campaign was a fellow-traveling fiasco. In the third place, there were more-centrist liberals who voiced grave concern over Washington's policy in Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, Lebanon in 1958 (all these episodes are omitted by Beinart), and elsewhere, and who did not think that the Cold War was a license for imperialism. Finally, there has probably never been a more hubristic rhetoric—or practice—than during the time of the New Frontier (which so memorably featured the rhetorical skills of Schlesinger). Within a decade and a half of the Willard Hotel meeting, the Camelot darling of American liberals had risked global catastrophe over Cuba and committed the United States to the degrading role of successor to the French Empire in Indochina, all

be made to the effect that the United States' ruling establishment is often the author of its own misfortunes. But this does not exempt the citizens of the country, confronted with chickens from whatever roost they may originate, from deciding whether or not these birds of ill omen should be shot down. And on this visceral point, as Beinart eventually concedes with infinite regret, the Right appears to speak with less ambiguity.

Jimmy Carter was not Henry Wallace, but Beinart's history of liberalism during the post-Vietnam years identifies the same mentality—of wishful thinking about the Evil Empire—that gave the Right its next big chance. In this narrative, the role of the ADA is superseded by the roles of Scoop Jackson and the now-forgotten Congressman Dave McCurdy, who sought a "third way" in the crisis over Central America. The eventual implosion of the Soviet system makes some of these debates

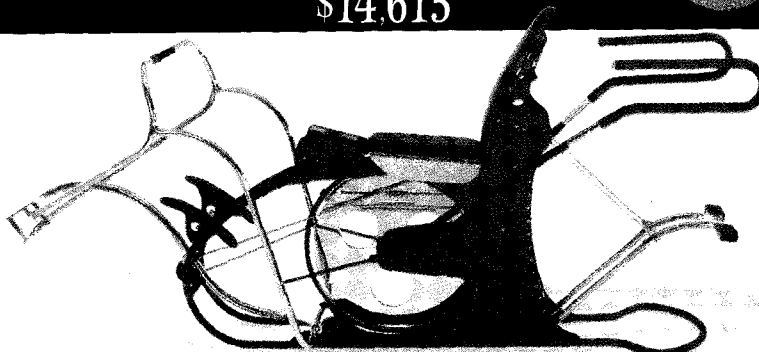
appear to be further away from us than they really are. (The dispute between Paul Berman and Michael Moore, the former of whom wrote a *Mother Jones* piece critical of the Sandinistas that was censored by the latter, was, however, a harbinger.) Beinart understates the importance of Ronald Reagan's abandonment of "mutual assured destruction," or MAD, a long-standing, containment-based bipartisan commitment that was suddenly (and correctly) discovered to be unstable as well as immoral. Not only did this policy shift perform well in the world of "realism," in that the decision to retool for strategic defense had a measurable influence upon Mikhail Gorbachev; it also had the effect of making liberal noises about a nuclear "freeze" seem tinny and irrelevant. The other great argument of the time—over the imposition of sanctions on South Africa—gave the Left the moral high ground for a year or two, but was eventually co-opted by Reagan and Margaret Thatcher as well.

If American liberalism had seriously wanted to regain its moral standing after the Cold War ended, the re-emergence of the one-party, one-leader aggressive state, in the forms of Greater Serbia and Greater Iraq, should have provided the ideal opportunity. But although the first President Bush secured United Nations support, and Syrian and Egyptian troops, for the recovery of Kuwait, he did so without any noticeable help from the left of center, who were too fastidious about the oil issue to soil their hands. (We can now say, with almost 100 percent certainty, that if Saddam Hussein had kept Kuwait, he would have acquired the bomb.) In Bosnia, where there was no oil but there was genocide, a "New Democrat" administration was finally persuaded to take action, again without the support of the large and consistent anti-war wing of American politics, whose members moaned ceaselessly about quagmire. Most of the traditional Right was silent or hostile on this occasion, too. Those who pressed for solidarity with Bosnia included some leftists like Susan Sontag, a great part of the American Jewish community, and a few traditional hawks—but perhaps most notably (and in a case that did

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BY BRUCE HOFFMAN

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A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954–1962 (1978), by Alistair Horne. A classic account of the challenges and dilemmas faced by a liberal democratic state—France—as it contended with the terrorist tactics of Algeria's independence movement.

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Terror Out of Zion: The Fight for Israeli Independence (1996), by J. Bowyer Bell. The story of the first post-World War II terrorist campaign—and the British government's ineffectual efforts to defeat it.

Bruce Hoffman holds the Corporate Chair in Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency at the RAND Corporation.

not involve the state interest of Israel) the emerging neoconservatives. As one who took part in this argument, I can testify that many on the pro-Bosnian Left had more or less to assure themselves that their demand for intervention was kosher, precisely because it did *not* seem to be in the immediate national-security interest of the United States. Blood for no oil!

All of this was a dismal prelude to the crisis that struck the United States in the fall of 2001. One *knew*, before that terrible day was out, what would be said by the academic and journalistic and Hollywood Left. Much of the rhetoric of that time has been forgotten (though not by me), and now those who never wanted a fight in Afghanistan in the first place are free to complain that the war with al-Qaeda in Iraq is a distraction from the struggle they opposed. But in some untranslatable manner, this two-faced position has communicated itself to a large number of American voters. These people may be as uninformed as Beinart complains they are (look how many of them believe that Saddam Hussein was behind the World Trade Center attacks), but they are not so stupid as to believe that the president invaded Iraq to avenge his daddy, or to swell the coffers of Halliburton, or to please General Sharon. Nor are they so dumb and credulous as to believe that there would be no jihadists in Iraq if it were not for the Coalition presence. Fatuity of that kind—especially the last kind—is the preserve of the Democratic intelligentsia, not just of the MoveOn.org types but also of figures like Harry Reid, Barbara Boxer, and Al Gore. I am not a tremendous admirer of Senator Joseph Lieberman, but his expressed opinions make him a smaller figure in Democratic circles than was Henry Wallace in 1948. How can a Truman emerge from this galère?

In other words, the whole comparison with the ADA is hopelessly inexact. The hard-liners in 1948 were principled enough to do the Democratic Party the favor of deserting it and running their own slate. They were also, one might concede, at least intelligible in their naïveté about the U.S.S.R. A thinking person could, then at least, be brought to believe that state socialism was an

improvement on monopoly capitalism, and that war was to be avoided at any price. In the present case, however, not only are the hard-liners the activist and fund-raising core of the party; they also express ambivalence about a foe that does not even pretend to share the values of the Enlightenment, and that is furthermore immune to the cruder rationality of MAD. The Soviet leadership had every reason to avoid suicide, while the Islamist fanatics dream of nothing else. In this context, Beinart's wishful and halfhearted belief that Saddam Hussein could have been contained is the one position that nobody can seriously hold. He gives himself away when he argues that a continuation of the cruel and indiscriminate sanctions could have led the Baathist regime to self-destruct. Has he even tried to imagine what Iraq would have looked like on the day that that self-destruction occurred? Let us just assume that it would not have been a Velvet Revolution. It would have more closely resembled a Rwanda or a Congo on the Gulf. Bad as things are now, they would certainly have been worse.

Thus, however ineptly it may have been phrased and implemented, the Bush administration's improvised adoption of political change in the region may bear some comparison with Reagan's repudiation of Cold War stasis. And I see no sign that the American Left and the liberals understand what it means to have become once again the party of the status quo. In his wishful and overconfident subtitle, where he asserts that *only* liberals can win this war, Beinart vainly tries to split a difference. In the first place, it is a war against a version of apocalyptic fascism, of which terrorism is only the expression. In the second place, the bulk of the liberal consensus has already demonstrated a want of spine and sinew, and ceded much ground to the freshly converted and clumsy anti-isolationist Right. Retrospect may grant us time to pass a verdict on which of these two blunders was the decisive one. Meanwhile, the rough retranslation of Beinart's title is *Hillary in 2008*—a prospect some distance short of a liberal dream. ▀

Christopher Hitchens is a contributing editor of The Atlantic and a columnist for Vanity Fair.

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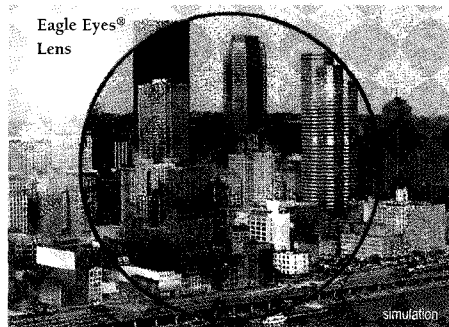
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WORLD HISTORY



Osman's Dream

by Caroline Finkel (*Basic*)

Seven centuries of the Ottoman Empire.

Earthly Powers

by Michael Burleigh (*HarperCollins*)

The first of two planned volumes that will trace the intertwining of religion and political violence, this one focusing on the period between the French Revolution and World War I.

Victorian London

by Liza Picard (*St. Martin's*)

A social history covering the years between 1840 and 1870, the first chapter of which focuses exclusively on the ambient stench that daily confronted Victorian Londoners.

June 1941: Hitler and Stalin

by John Lukacs (*Yale*)

Arguing that history is the product of specific choices rather than impersonal forces, the historian watches as two specific people make very specific decisions that will shape the rest of the twentieth century.

Islamic Imperialism

by Efraim Karsh (*Yale*)

A historian posits a will to domination as an essential ingredient of Islam, from Muhammad to the Ottomans to Osama bin Laden.

BIOGRAPHY



A Godly Hero

by Michael Kazin (*Knopf*)

His Scopes-trial star turn notwithstanding, William Jennings Bryan here emerges as a proto-New Dealer and an exponent of an unrealized religious left.

Kingfish

by Richard D. White Jr. (*Random House*)
Huey Long: ruthless autocrat or populist hero? Actually, both.

Fatal Purity

by Ruth Scurr (*Metropolitan*)

Maximilien Robespierre began his career as a provincial lawyer opposed to the death penalty; he ended up as something quite different. He also looked like a cat and was partial to elaborate waistcoats.

Stravinsky: The Second Exile

by Stephen Walsh (*Knopf*)

The concluding volume of this two-part biography follows Igor Stravinsky from Paris to two destinations perhaps not immediately associated with the composer: California and the 1970s.

SOCIETY and CULTURE



The Way Hollywood Tells It

by David Bordwell (California)

A close reading of the narrative and visual craft behind the modern Hollywood blockbuster.

White Guilt

by Shelby Steele (HarperCollins)

As official racism in the United States receded, a destructive moral relativism advanced, argues the prominent black conservative scholar.

1973 Nervous Breakdown

by Andreas Killen (Bloomsbury)

A study identifying 1973—the year of *Roe v. Wade*, the earliest stirrings of punk rock, and the premiere of the first reality-TV show—as the definitive end of the sixties and a turning point in contemporary history.

First in Violence, Deepest in Dirt

by Jeffrey S. Adler (Harvard)

Chicago's murder rate quadrupled between 1875 and 1920 as modernity firmly took hold. Not exactly a coincidence, this criminologist argues.

BUSINESS and ECONOMICS



Why Most Things Fail

by Paul Ormerod (Pantheon)

An economist identifies failure, not success, as the most telling of all economic indicators.

Rome, Inc.

by Stanley Bing (Atlas Books)

A leading business satirist projects the rise and fall of Rome onto contemporary corporate culture, attempting to extract meaningful management lessons therefrom.

The Economics of Attention

by Richard A. Lanham (Chicago)

The future of human perception will be governed not by a surplus of information but by a scarcity of attention required to process said information.

Revolutionary Wealth

by Alvin and Heidi Toffler (Knopf)

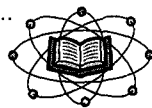
The noted futurists turn their gaze to the massive wealth generated by the tech revolution and how it will further change the world.

Knowledge and the Wealth of Nations

by David Warsh (Norton)

An in-depth look at the “new growth theory,” conceived by Adam Smith and unproven until recently, with profound implications for us all.

SCIENCE



Before the Dawn

by Nicholas Wade (Penguin Press)

A *New York Times* science reporter draws on new DNA-analysis techniques to examine the prehistoric people who became the ancestors of all mankind.

Success Through Failure

by Henry Petroski (Princeton)

From caveman tools to the Tacoma Narrows Bridge to the World Trade Center, failure is innovation's constant companion.

SPORTS



Black and Blue

by Tom Adelman (Little, Brown)

A look back at the 1966 World Series, in which the underdog Orioles swept the Dodgers.

Man o' War

by Dorothy Ours (St. Martin's)

A biography of Seabiscuit's grandfather.

Clemente

by David Maraniss (Simon & Schuster)

A life of the virtuous and doomed slugger.

MEMOIR



My Life in France

by Julia Child with

Alex Prud'homme (Knopf)

A posthumously published memoir by the late chef, focusing on her time in France from 1948 to 1954, which sparked her—and, by extension, everyone else's—interest in French cooking.

A Writer's Life

by Gay Talese (Knopf)

The nonfiction master tells his own story and several others.

Teta, Mother, and Me

by Jean Said Makdisi (Norton)

Edward Said's sister's remembrance of her mother and grandmother serves as a personal history of three generations of Palestinians.

A Death in Belmont

by Sebastian Junger (Norton)

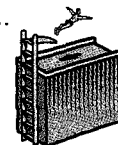
How *The Perfect Storm's* author's mother came face-to-face with the Boston Strangler—and lived to tell the tale.

Let Me Finish

by Roger Angell (Harcourt)

“Life is tough and brimming with loss,” the longtime *New Yorker* contributor concludes in this collection of autobiographical essays, “and the most we can do about it is to glimpse ourselves clear now and then, and find out what we feel about familiar scenes and recurring faces this time around.”

NOVELS and SHORT STORIES



My Latest Grievance

by Elinor Lipman (Houghton Mifflin)

A teenager growing up on the campus of a women's college in the 1970s has her life complicated when her father's heretofore unrevealed ex-wife moves to town.

Fortunate Son

by Walter Mosley (Little, Brown)

The lives of a privileged white boy and a sickly black boy converge and diverge unexpectedly in this novel from the creator of the Easy Rawlins mysteries.

We Are All Welcome Here

by Elizabeth Berg (Random House)

A polio-stricken woman raises her teenage daughter in mid-1960s Mississippi in this novel inspired by a true story.

Black Swan Green

by David Mitchell (Random House)

A new novel from the author of *Cloud Atlas* recreates the year 1982 through the eyes of a thirteen-year-old boy in rural England.

This Book Will Save Your Life

by A. M. Homes (Viking)

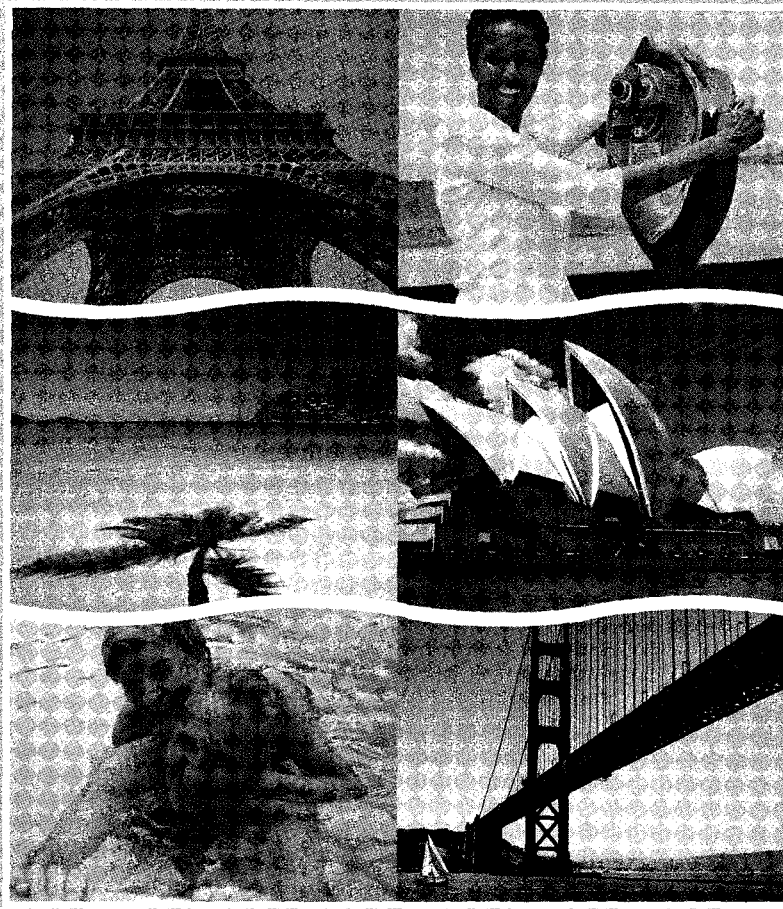
Biology and geology conspire to jolt a day trader out of his midlife torpor.

L'America

by Martha McPhee (Harcourt)

An American woman and an Italian man begin a love affair in the Greek islands, and subsequently face geopolitical crises great and small.

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TRAVELS

The Father of the Piña Colada?

Visitors to Barbados can see where George Washington slept—really

BY WAYNE CURTIS

It's a totally educated guess," said Penelope Hynam, "but we can surmise reasonably, and be about ninety-five percent certain, that this was George Washington's bedroom."

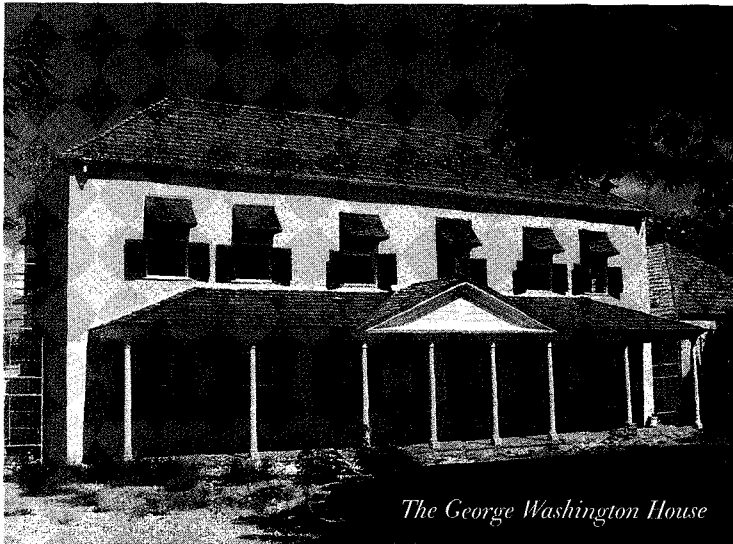
The room in question is in the corner of the George Washington House, a rectangular yellow building on a low bluff between a horse track and a for-

ested gulley just outside of Bridgetown, Barbados. Hynam, the director of the house, pointed out some of the original beams, from 1719, and noted that Washington's presumed bedroom ceiling would have been not much over six feet high when he lodged here, in late 1751. Washington stood some six foot three. "George didn't say anything

about ducking, but I'm sure he had to," she said.

It's a peculiar image: the statuesque Washington stooping through a low-ceilinged house in the Caribbean. Washington always had about him an aura of upright, alabaster formality—the historian Joseph Ellis has called him "the original marble man"—and one tends to visualize him rigidly crossing the Delaware through ice floes or striding among beleaguered troops during the long winter at Valley Forge. It's jarring to imagine him at ease among

A sugar mill at St. Nicholas Abbey, a seventeenth-century estate



The George Washington House

palm trees and on sunny beaches with tropical drinks. (Washington separately mentioned both rum and pineapple in his journal, but regrettably there is no record of his ever combining the two, let alone adding coconut milk.)

Washington was one of the most widely traveled of colonial Americans when it came to his own country. Yet for all his errand-running up and down the Eastern Seaboard and across the Appalachians, he never ventured to Great Britain or Europe, as did Adams, Jefferson, and Franklin. His trip to Barbados, at age nineteen, was the only time he ever left American soil. He was accompanying his tubercular half brother, Lawrence, who was sent to the tropics on the advice of a doctor. The future president's two-month stay on the island was basically his junior year abroad, an eye-opening trip that would influence his later outlook on politics and life.

"Historians throughout American history have ignored this journey," said Hynam, who is overseeing the restoration of the house and the creation within it of a museum, slated to open in January 2007. "Almost any biography of George Washington gives it maybe a paragraph or two. Which is incredible—they really haven't used their minds on this one."

Longtime island visitors sometimes grouse that Barbados has lost much of its Caribbean-ness. It's

beachfront along the western coast, where beachgoers are shielded from the northeasterly trade winds by geography and from outside untidiness by guards and gatehouses.

Yet the island still has considerable innate beauty. Much of the interior is filled with improbably green sugarcane fields, which look like heroically overgrown lawns. And the eastern side still has an open wildness to it, largely undeveloped and raked by the winds.

Prosperity is not a new phenomenon here. Tiny Barbados—about one-seventh the size of Rhode Island—was at one time arguably the wealthiest and most sophisticated society in the hemisphere. Great fortunes had been built

become too modern, they say, too traffic-choked, and, in short, has committed the sin of becoming too prosperous. The main highway near Bridgetown is cluttered with auto dealerships, squat office buildings, and boxy gas stations, and the low coastal hills are dotted with red-tile-roofed mini-estates corralled in tidy subdivisions. Pricy resorts occupy prime

smallpox. His instincts were sound: two weeks later, he "was strongly attacked" by the pox, which kept him housebound for nearly a month and gave him his famously pockmarked complexion. Historians speculate that it gave him something more: a lifelong immunity, which proved handy when the disease ravaged his troops during the Revolutionary War.

The brothers eventually rented a house from one Captain Croftan, the commander of a nearby fort. They paid fifteen pounds a month "exclusive of Liquors & washing," though not without some grumbling. Records have surfaced indicating that Croftan had earlier rented the house for ten pounds a month, thus giving Washington the distinction of being possibly the first American tourist housed by an islander.

Other details about Washington's stay on Barbados are sketchy. He was never chatty in his journal, and he made no entries at all during the month he was sick. What's more, some of the journal pages have rotted away, and others were lost when the nineteenth-century historian and Harvard President Jared Sparks sliced them up in order to give friends and autograph hunters souvenirs of Washington's handwriting.

So little was known of Washington's visit to Barbados that for decades people who wanted to see where he slept were directed to the wrong place.

Washington always had about him an aura of upright, alabaster formality, and it's jarring to imagine him at ease among palm trees and on sunny Caribbean beaches.

on sugar and slavery in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the sugar barons spared little expense in splicing the cultural DNA of England onto their densely populated island.

The Washington brothers arrived on Barbados in November 1751 and were welcomed by Major Gedney Clarke, with whom they were acquainted through family connections. They visited the Clarke home "with some reluctance," George wrote in his journal, because the household had recently been beset by

A house across from the yacht club had been misidentified by amateur historians in 1912, and the mistake persisted until recently, in part because the house was featured on a Barbados stamp, and in part because the owner had grown fond of the plaque and proved churlish about taking it down.

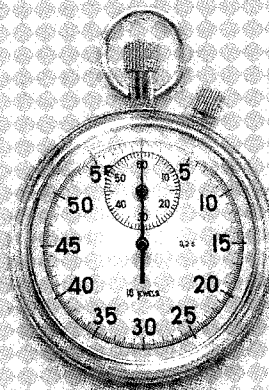
Most serious historians, however, believed all along that the authentic Washington house was the one next door to the present-day horse track. But it wasn't until 1989 that researchers

PENELOPE HYNAM

happened upon documents that proved it beyond dispute. The house was placed in the care of the Barbados National Trust in the late 1990s, and since then the structure and grounds have been subject to exhaustive investigations. During my first visit, two years ago, the building looked like a roast turkey the day after Thanksgiving; it had been torn apart by architectural historians trying to figure out the original floor plan. (No small task: the house underwent major changes in the 1830s and 1870s, and more recently served as accommodations for employees of the local power company.) The exterior is being restored to its appearance c. 1870, when the second floor was added. Inside, the first floor will be sparsely furnished to look as it did during Washington's visit, albeit with higher ceilings. The second floor will feature exhibits on eighteenth-century Barbados and the island's ties with the northern colonies. "It's a fabulous detective project," Hynam said.

As is figuring out how Barbados influenced Washington's character. "It must have had a profound effect on a nineteen-year-old with a bright, inquiring mind," Hynam said. While in Barbados, Washington attended his first professional London play (*George Barnwell, a Tragedy*). He had the chance to observe advanced agricultural techniques employed on an intensely cultivated island. He studied military fortifications of a type he'd never seen before. He noted the vast gap between the wealthy and the poor, and the absence of a middle class. He saw the effects of a colonial system that had, as in Virginia, left many planters mired in debt to the mother country. And he attended dinners with prominent islanders, where he no doubt heard what happened to the Stuarts who rose up against the king in 1745 (the luckier ones were exiled to Barbados). It was among his most personal encounters with the Anglocentric high society he would later rebel against.

The island, which was once commonly referred to as "Little England," flew the British flag without interruption between 1627 and 1966. A statue of Lord Nelson stands in the former



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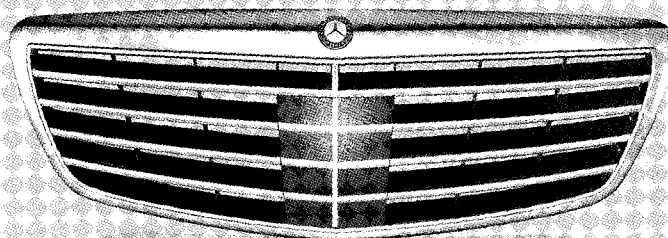


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THE TRAVEL ADVISORY

What to see and do on Barbados

The newly restored **George Washington House** and a museum within it will open to the public in January 2007.

George Washington House
Bush Hill, The Garrison, St. Michael
246-228-5461

St. Nicholas Abbey—in fact a Jacobean mansion—was sold last January by the family that owned it since 1810; the new owner intends to keep it open to the public.

St. Nicholas Abbey
Cherry Tree Hill, St. Peter
246-422-8725
www.barbados.org/nicabbey.htm

At the **Sunbury Plantation House** you can browse exhibits and enjoy light meals in the restaurant.

Sunbury Plantation House
6 Cross Rd., St. Philip
246-423-6270
www.barbadosgreathouse.com

Cobblers Cove, a lushly landscaped hotel complex of spacious suites flanking a World War II-era mansion, is known for its weekly caviar-and-vodka buffet.

Cobblers Cove
Speightstown, St. Peter
800-890-6060 (U.S. and Canada)
246-422-2291
www.cobblerscove.com

The **Coconut Court Beach Hotel** is a low-key, mid-rise property within walking distance of the George Washington House. Expect small kitchens in the guest rooms and karaoke near the pool.

Coconut Court Beach Hotel
Hastings, Christ Church
246-427-1655
www.coconut-court.com

Restaurants geared to the tourist trade are as abundant as they are pricey. **Naniki** offers contemporary island fare in a unique setting that includes an anthurium farm.

Naniki
Lush Life Nature Resort
Suriname, St. Joseph
246-433-1300
www.lushlife.bb

Trafalgar Square (renamed National Heroes Square in 1999). American travelers to Barbados today can walk in Washington's footsteps and marvel at a culture that is both familiar and exotic.

I stayed at Cobblers Cove, a former sugar planter's beach house recast as an elegant small resort. The guest rooms have wicker chairs, languorous ceiling fans, and Edwardian-era prints of tropical plants; guests may feel as though they've walked into one of those British Campaign spreads in a Pottery Barn catalog. Impish green monkeys of the sort seen on retro colonial-empire upholstery played outside on the grounds, at times crashing onto the roof with the delicacy of a misplayed medicine ball.

Washington's two-month stay on Barbados was basically his junior year abroad, an eye-opening trip that would influence his later outlook on politics and life.

The hotel was populated chiefly by British tourists (none of whom, evidently, had received the memo about sandals and black socks). At breakfast on a terrace overlooking the ocean, toast arrived upright in a tidy stainless-steel rack, accompanied by shot-glass-sized containers of marmalade. In the afternoons, tea and what appeared to be crumpets were set out near a patio.

The island's Anglo antiquity is as much a draw as its palm-fringed beaches and upscale restaurants. Like Washington, I spent my days examining forts and sugarcane fields, which are dotted with the stumps of old stone windmills. I dropped in at several venerable estates, including Sunbury Plantation House, which dates back more than three centuries and stands with a grave dignity amid a shady thicket. It's now a museum with a courtyard restaurant; the cellar and second-floor bedrooms have been given over to artifacts with neatly handwritten labels, including "pond grass scraper" and "Victorian knickers."

More impressive still is St. Nicholas Abbey, a regal Jacobean mansion built

about 1650, with Dutch gables and coral stone finials. Reached through an allée of mahogany trees, it has the feel of a fugitive estate from a Jane Austen novel, muffled in an ancient silence interrupted from time to time by the insane screech of the guinea fowl that roam the grounds with a haughty and proprietary air. The birds sometimes charge at visitors, forcing them to take evasive measures involving brisk, awkward steps.

Which brings to mind cricket. Islanders are daft about the sport. You can see it played informally on various grounds around the island, or catch periodic matches at the Kensington Oval. (The World Cup finals will be held here next year.) I know as much about cricket as

I do about crumpets. Washington had the London theater to make him feel like a slack-jawed rube from the provinces; I had cricket.

No matches were scheduled during my stay, but I watched children being coached on a neighborhood pitch, and later stopped by the Centre for Cricket Excellence's Walk of Fame on the campus of the University of the West Indies, just outside Bridgetown. I took the time to admire a list of every West Indian batsman who'd scored a "century," and every bowler who'd effected five or more "dismissals." (A century, I was later informed, is a score of 100 points by an individual player, and a dismissal is something like an out in baseball.)

Here was foreign travel at its best: when you find yourself in a fugue state, where people speak a familiar language, yet all you hear is intoxicating jibberish. This was, I believe with about 95 percent certainty, the state in which George Washington spent at least part of his sojourn abroad. ▀

Wayne Curtis is the author of And a Bottle of Rum: A History of the New World in 10 Cocktails, to be published in July.

Madrid Fusion

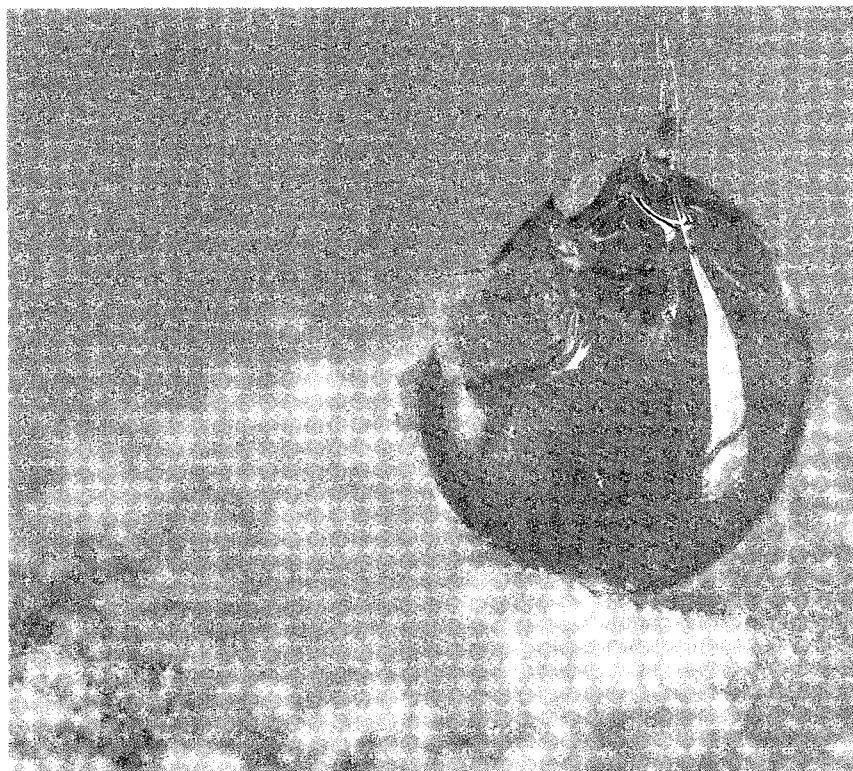
The pleasures and perils of the Spanish gastronomic avant-garde

BY CORBY KUMMER

“Oh, you mean the foam chef?” That’s how friends reacted when I mentioned that I was going to a dinner at which Ferrán Adrià, the idol of young chefs around the world, would for the first time dine at Minibar, a six-seat restaurant opened by his chief disciple in the United States—José Andrés, a successful restaurateur in Washington, D.C. El Bulli, Adrià’s restaurant in northern Spain, has been dazzling chefs since Adrià began a course of wild experimentation, in the late 1980s. Making the twisty two-hour drive from Barcelona for a dinner that lasts well into the wee hours has become a notch on every foodie’s belt—perhaps the notch, given the international derby to get reservations (the restaurant is open only six months a year).

Adrià was recently the recipient of a tribute dinner in Miami, where some of the country’s best-known chefs, including Thomas Keller, of French Laundry and Per Se, and Nobu Matsuhisa, of the many Nobus around the world, cooked dishes inspired by his radical innovation. The Washington dinner was his expression of solidarity with a cook who apprenticed with him starting at age sixteen (at the time Adrià was just beginning to veer from traditional Catalan cuisine) and made his name and fortune in America.

Radical innovation in cuisine has always gone clear against my grain. Although I had met Adrià at various events sponsored by Slow Food, and understood from his showing up that he valued the farmers and food traditions the group works to save, I had little interest in exploring his food. This could have dated from the initial, and lasting, trauma of a warm, fawn-colored savory foam presented at the side of an unsuspecting piece of fish at Restaurant Bouley, ten years ago in New York. Soon chefs inspired by Adrià’s relatively low-tech method of instant flavor delivery were pureeing anything and everything



and loading it into a spritzer. Foams where you least expected them, lurid extrusions, and futuristic, unrecognizable food spread in waves across the tables of the country’s most ambitious restaurants. My mind, and my stomach, were sealed when a dimpled plastic tray appeared at a dead-chic Boston restaurant before the meal, holding beige bouffant sticks of what turned out to be liver-flavored cotton candy.

I decided to reopen my mind, at least, and understand why so many chefs now feel that they are mired in the past—or worse, the present—unless they attend Madrid Fusión, a conference now in its fourth year. Word has spread that the event, which takes place over three days in mid-January, usually a downtime for chefs, is the leading edge of the avant-garde. Many chefs from Boston, where I live, found the budget to bring themselves and some of their crew to watch three days of cooking demonstrations using the very latest technology. Adrià, unsurprisingly, was the keynote speaker. He began his presentation—a list of twenty-three “commandments” all chefs should follow—with a video of some of the derby winners dining at El Bulli, exchanging looks of surprise, delight, and deep meditation.

Juan Mari Arzak, another founding father of the new Spanish cuisine, showed big-screen pictures of a large and expensive freeze-drying machine, with Erlenmeyer flasks radiating from it collecting freeze-dried monkfish skin. He had brought from his restaurant vials of the granules to sprinkle over fried monkfish and monkfish liver served with ginger and chickpea powder beside a spoon containing monkfish marrow and little crisps of deep-fried shaved monkfish bone. He showed a pigeon leg served with melted beeswax made into a spread with apple, fried garlic and almonds, honey, and pollen. (He also freeze-dries clarified beeswax.)

Dani García, a sympathetic and enthusiastic chef from Andalusia, demonstrated how he uses one of the many high-tech industrial-capacity stainless-steel machines that appeared onstage throughout the conference like cult objects. This one could fry whole, ungutted fish like rockfish or sole at precisely 180 degrees Centigrade, such that the skin would balloon away from the flesh but form a hermetic seal that would keep out oil. The cooking is so sudden and complete, he said, that live fish curls as it does when plunged into

FIVE CHEFS UNDER THE INFLUENCE

U.S. restaurants at the crest of the Spanish new wave

Minibar, 405 8th Street NW, Washington, D.C., www.cafeatlantico.com. Four chefs, six stools, two seatings for course tastings devised by José Andrés, who began working for Ferrán Adrià at sixteen.

Ureña, 37 East 28th Street, New York City, 212-213-2328. Alex Ureña, a native of the Dominican Republic who worked in numerous high-profile kitchens in New York and Spain, has just opened his tribute to the new Spanish revolution, with a kitchen stocked with the requisite gadgets.

wd~50, 50 Clinton Street, New York City, 212-477-2900. Providence native Wylie Dufresne calls his food "New American," but Spain is a clear influence on his provocative menu.

Alinea, 1723 North Halsted Street, Chicago, 312-867-0110. Deliberately disorienting food from Grant Achatz, one of the wildest and most acclaimed of the country's experimental chefs.

Bastide, 8475 Melrose Place, Los Angeles, 323-651-5950. Chef Ludovic Levebre trained in his native France with post-nouvelle cuisine chefs; the owners of the popular restaurant in Los Angeles, where he made his mark, will soon reopen it under a new name as a showcase for his novelties.

simmering broth for *truite au bleu*. Under the fish, he said, he often serves candied cherry tomatoes with soy sauce.

Visiting stars like Thomas Keller and Andrés himself also spoke. (Andrés's own guest star was the American guru of all chefs who wish to understand the science of preparing food—Harold McGee, the author of *On Food and Cooking*.) Sergio Herman, a Michelin-starred young chef in Amsterdam, exemplified the younger style, mixing together Japanese ingredients like soy and matcha green tea with oysters in aspic, oyster foam, wasabi mayonnaise, Belgian white beer, lime juice, and lecithin—all in one

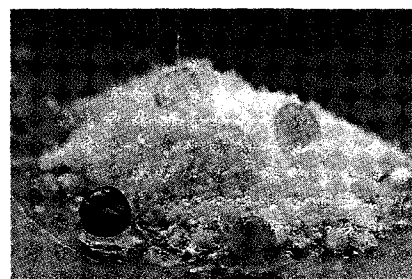
dish. Handsome and with gleaming, carefully sculpted hair, Herman gravely accepted applause for his multimedia presentation like an athlete bowing after a particularly virtuosic feat.

It was all a bit much, and during breaks I headed straight for the stands serving hand-cut Iberico de Bellota, perhaps the world's best ham, and to the clublike Casa Lucio downtown for its signature thick-cut potatoes fried in olive oil with a sunny-side-up egg on top.

The Washington dinner unexpectedly brought me right to where both Adrià and Arzak repeatedly told the rapt chefs at the conference they needed to be every day: a state of surprise. At Minibar, Adrià sat at his stool watching four cooks (for six diners) prepare a stream of small dishes, and ate each one with the receptive wonder of an eight-year-old boy. Andrés beamed.

Some of the dishes were conceits: carpaccio-thin raw Wagyu beef with sliced fresh black truffle layered over a mini-torpedo of crispbread filled with a thick cheese foam that is Andrés's version of Philly cheese steak (it was very good, if lacking the original's essential chewiness); "natural" lobster that combines all the liquid, fat, and goo that drips from and clings to a cooked lobster, steamed into a warm gel; dressing for a deconstructed Caesar salad served in a biomorphic little blob in the middle of the plate, the skin formed by adding alginate, a seaweed derivative.

But I understood the flavors in each one, even if the temperature and texture were far from what I was used to, and I understood why they should go together (raw sea scallops with a raspberry-and-beet sorbet). And one dish leapt out at me: grilled *cigala*, the sweet, meaty Spanish langoustine also called Norway lobster or scampi, topped with a shard of salty, buttery, paper-thin bread in place of the traditional bread crumbs for frying. For the first time I could sympathize when Andrés said, "If I want to be a farmer, I'll give you an apple. If I'm a cook, I have to do something with it. Sometimes I'm at a table and people will tell me how weird my food is and how much I move it around—and they're having a Coke. And I'm the one who realizes Coke is amazing, because I don't know how to do it."



My own preference has always been to take the apple, not the freeze-dried skin or the crystallized juice. But I saw why young chefs scrape together the money to go to Madrid Fusión: they want to be part of the future, and they want to be artists. Andrés demonstrates every day at his other restaurants—Café Atlántico, serving pan-Latin cuisine; Jaleo, a more casual tapas bar; and Zaytinya, with Greek- and Turkish-influenced cuisine—that he knows the rules of presenting clear flavors and excellent ingredients, and he has earned the right to break them. At Minibar, his own laboratory (which the other restaurants subsidize), he has achieved the goal those young chefs long for—self-expression.

I asked Adrià at the end what he thought of the meal, and he answered indirectly. "Traditional cooking is the culture of the people," he said. "In gastronomic cooking, it's the culture of a person. Minibar is the way to understand the life of Jose Andrés." If that *cigala* was the evening's purest expression of his life, I'm willing to follow Andrés—and maybe even other Adrià acolytes—into the future.

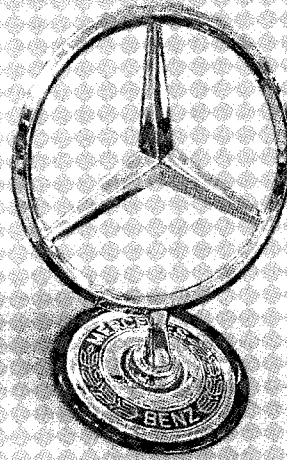
The Rioja Renaissance

An old Spanish wine takes on new life

Spanish wine has been heading into the future in something of the same way that Spanish food has, though not at the same torrid pace.

As with food, the “faults” Spanish winemakers have needed to correct in order to catch up to the modern world can be considered virtues. True, the system for making wine in much of the country was, until well into the twentieth century, literally antique: grapes were crushed in stone troughs, using methods not far evolved from stomping, and were then stored in concrete amphorae, whose imperfect seals led to a Spanish taste for oxidized rancio wine. A national ban on irrigation, lifted only in 1996, accounted for a lower yield per vine, and so did unimproved grape varieties. (Spain has more land planted with grapes than any other country in the world, but it produces less wine than France or Italy.) The virtues, of course, were intensely flavored grapes, little to no use of fertilizer and herbicides, and old and strong vines not yet torn out for the merlot of the moment.

Even if many of Spain’s wine-making methods were unchanged for millennia, some parts of the country nevertheless had a head start in catching up to the rest of the wine world—most notably Rioja, the best-known Spanish wine region. Thanks to its relatively cool and dry climate and its location in north-central Spain, just over the Pyrenees from France, Rioja winemakers looked to Bordeaux as the closest analogue from which to draw lessons on how to make better wine—and get more money for it. When the phylloxera blight went through Bordeaux, in the 1870s, French winemaker-merchants suddenly needed Rioja more than Rioja needed them. Their own vines devastated, they began working in Rioja vineyards and selling Rioja wine. By 1900, the Rioja norm became long aging in new oak barrels, often American oak. Many of the wines were superb, and up to Bordeaux



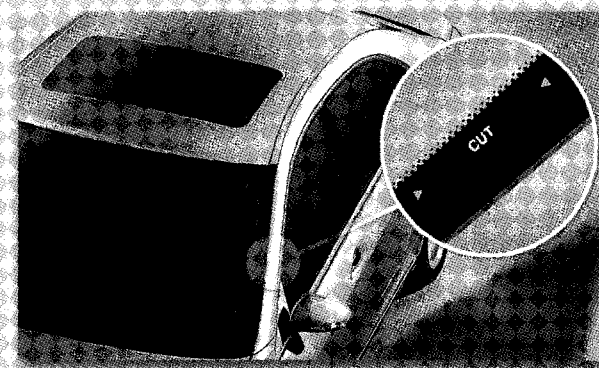
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standards. But after Bordeaux vineyards recovered, Rioja returned to being almost completely overshadowed.

There things remained until the 1960s, when new and young wine fans discovered in Rioja a wine they could afford—and one they could drink right away, without the space- and time-hogging tedium of cellaring. A large advantage of Spanish bottling and labeling laws is that any red reserva wine has to have been aged at least three years, two of them in oak and one in the bottle. (Gran reserva red wines, aged five years, are made in especially good years.) There was no need to wait, even if some wines would improve with age. Rioja began to develop an international reputation for producing well-priced reds comparable to Bordeaux.

The Spanish wine industry is going in for some fairly radical innovation today—no surprise, given Spain's national pursuit of the avant-garde. Stainless-steel fermenting tanks, with their pinpoint temperature control, arrived as early as the 1960s, brought by the forward-thinking Miguel Torres to the Penedès region of Catalonia; now they are nearly universal, and Barcelona exports them. Many winemakers are giving in to the (Robert) Parkerization of wines, using big-name red grapes that will make high-alcohol, knockout wines rather than the more-subtle, lower-alcohol wines—which come from a wide variety of little-known indigenous grapes—that have been traditional. (Naturally, Frank Gehry has been called in. At Madrid Fusión, and later in New York, at a show of new Spanish architecture, I admired his plans for a spectacular new inn—all undulating strips of colored titanium—at Marques de Riscal, a long-standing and innovative Rioja winery.)

But some winemakers are taking a more moderate view, respecting tradition while carefully innovating. This is the approach championed by Gerry Dawes, a writer, photographer, and all-round expert on Spanish food and wine who visits the country often. He pointed me to the Rioja maker Contino—a relatively new (1974) winery that was one of the first in Rioja to sell single-estate wines—as an exemplar of the best of the old and new. Its winemaker, Jesús Madrazo, grew up tasting the best vintages of Rioja

thanks to a family in the wine-making business for several generations. Dawes told me that his El Olivo, made mostly from Contino's old vines of Tempranillo, the classic Rioja grape (and the most widely planted in the country), "may be greatest single 'modern' wine I've ever tasted." By "modern" he meant made by a young winemaker (Madrazo is forty) using modern equipment like stainless-steel fermenting tanks; he did not mean the overpowering oak flavor now all too common in red wines, nor did he mean the new practice of producing wines so powerful and full of alcohol that I find it impossible to drink more than a small glass at a time. El Olivo averages 13.5 percent alcohol by volume, and Contino's reserva wines even less (around 13 percent), as compared with the 14 percent and 15 percent and even higher that winemakers now go to, hoping to win the Parker stamp of approval.

You can call Pasternak, the U.S. importer of El Olivo, at 914-630-8200, to find where the wine is sold near you; prices are upward of \$100 a bottle. On a recent visit to the Berkeley branch of the Spanish Table, a store I very much like that sells all manner of Spanish food, wine, and cookware, I was unable to find a bottle of El Olivo, but I did find a Contino Reserva from 1999, a vintage nearly as good as the 2001, which Dawes and others say will go down in history (it cost \$39.99; the Web site is www.spanishtable.com).

Reserva is the workhorse of Contino and other premium winemakers—the wine by which most consumers will judge it. I found Contino's much like the Riojas I have often admired, with the complexity and depth of Bordeaux but less heft (the Tempranillo grape is often compared to Pinot Noir), and the lower tannin that historically characterizes Rioja. Clove was prominent, along with bright berry and an agreeably mottled flavor palette (Dawes also tastes cocoa). I happened to drink it with a plate of meaty, dark-grilled squid with a chopped-olive sauce—just the sort of traditional but beautifully made tapa I might find in Spain, and a pairing that seemed perfect for a modestly excellent Spanish wine. ▀

Corby Kummer is a senior editor of The Atlantic.



TECHNOLOGY

Tinfoil Underwear

Tools to protect your privacy on the Internet go just so far, and the businesses that dominate it have no incentive to let them go any farther

BY JAMES FALLOWS

How concerned, really, should ordinary computer users be about the evidence we leave behind when we browse, shop, communicate, and amuse ourselves on the Internet? Early this year, as controversy built over the government's warrantless surveillance of telephone and computer messages, I asked a number of technology experts whether they were worried about their own privacy, and what steps, if any, they would recommend to the nonexpert computing public. I found strong agreement among them about the scale and nature of the problem, and a surprising emphasis on the need and the right way to deal with it.

The main thing the experts said they know, and the public probably doesn't, is how completely modern life has shifted to an "on-the-record" basis. You

can drop a letter in a mailbox without a return address and still expect to have it delivered. But that is about the only form of untraceable communication left. Most people understand this change to some degree. As long ago as the mid-1980s, a major twist in the plot of Scott Turow's *Presumed Innocent* involved computerized logs of calls made and received. Today a novel could be based on the details preserved in a single credit-card statement.

What most of us might not grasp is just how many activities can now be logged and stored. "To a large extent, we've willingly sacrificed our privacy for the conveniences of the Internet age," says Richard Forno, principal consultant with the information security firm KRvW Associates. OnStar and similar services keep track of locations from which customers make calls. This can be a lifesaver

in an emergency, but it also creates a record. Amazon and other online retailers can refine their sense of what we're looking for by analyzing permanent records of past purchases. We avoid the nuisance of reregistering each time we visit favorite sites, notably newspaper sites, by permitting (even if inadvertently) our computers to store "cookies," the small files that are created by the site we've visited and identify us when we return.

"There are three big categories" of possible intrusions into people's online privacy, according to Kevin Bankston, a lawyer with the Electronic Frontier Foundation, or EFF, in San Francisco. These are "what you store on your own computer, what other people are storing about you, and what's actually being captured or overheard in real time, by surveillance."

The first problem—cookies, old files, unfortunate browsing histories, and other potentially compromising data left on a machine—is the easiest for users to control. Nicole Wong, an associate general counsel at Google, made me burst out laughing with her preposterously wholesome illustration of how awkward situations might arise. "Suppose a husband was shopping online for his wife's birthday present, and he didn't want to spoil the surprise by having her see the sites he had visited—" (When I interjected "Come on!" she replied, "I've been interviewed before.") For instance, Internet Explorer, Firefox, and other major browsers can be set up not to retain cookies, temporary files, or histories of sites visited. This solves the problem, of course, only for family members or others who might want to peruse the contents of your hard drive.

Most people I spoke with said that the third problem—the highly publicized threat of eavesdropping by a Big Brotherish state—might bother them as a policy matter, but was not an active personal worry. EFF's Kevin Bankston pointed out that users could go far toward protecting themselves by encrypting their communications with powerful, relatively easily installed utilities like PGP ("Pretty Good Privacy"), a program that sells for \$99 and up at pgp.com, and GPG, an open-source counterpart available for free at gnupg.org. "We don't know the [National Security Agency]'s code-breaking capabilities,"

Bankston said, “but [any sort of encryption] would certainly slow them down.”

It was the second category—the inexorable pileup of information on a variety of Web sites—that all of the experts identified as the major long-term threat to a user’s privacy. “Data is being collected that was never collected before, that should not be collected now, and that cannot be protected in the long run,” says Marc Rotenberg, executive director of the Electronic Privacy Information Center, a civil-liberties advocacy group based in Washington. The technical developments that make this possible cannot easily be undone, but the business policies could be.

Nearly every interaction in today’s digital life is traceable. Cell-phone calls are of course routed to and from particular handsets—actually, to unique Subscriber Identity Modules, or SIM cards, inside the handset, each associated with a particular customer. E-mail messages, Web search requests, music-download orders, and all other signals sent from a computer are marked with the “IP address,” or Internet Protocol address, of the machine that sent them. This is a number something like “192.165.1.204” that identifies your particular computer amid the vastness of the Internet. IP addresses differ from phone numbers in many ways: some are permanently assigned to a given machine, some are reassigned session by session, some are shared on local networks. But in the end, their function is similar. They let other people reach you, and tell others who is trying to reach them.

Every query you send to Google contains both the terms you’re looking for and the IP address of your machine. Every site you visit can register the fact that someone from your IP address was there. (You can delete the cookies placed by *ViolentOverthrowOfTheGovernment.org* on your machine; you can’t do anything about the site’s own logs.) Every time you choose a story to read on an online news site the story you read, and your IP address, can be recorded in the site’s log. Every blog posting or comment, every email sent even under a fictitious account name, every item bid on through eBay or bought from

an online merchant, every request for a map to be downloaded or a picture viewed—they all carry an IP address.

Like a phone number, an IP address is merely digits, without a person’s name attached. But the connection between IP addresses and real people is almost as close as with telephone accounts. Anyone who pays for home Internet service, whether cable, DSL, or humble dial-up, has been assigned an IP address by a company that also knows the customer’s name. Most for-pay WiFi hot spots also require customers to create accounts with a real name and billing address. You can still go online without revealing your identity, if you’re willing to live like a fugitive: paying cash to use Internet cafés, sticking strictly to free, public WiFi spots, libraries, or schools. But for most people this is a chore.

The main privacy concerns about IP addresses stem from one business decision: the companies that collect and own the information traceable to them have decided to retain it more or less forever.

Why would Google, which receives hundreds of millions of search requests per day, warehouse every one of them, with IP address attached? Because it can. Disk storage has become essentially free. Also it wants to, because for Google and most other online firms, real-world transaction data is the most precious form of market intelligence. Nicole Wong, of Google, gave me the standard reasons why this ever-expanding hoard of data is best for the company and for its users as well. It may be retained to help firms investigate and remedy “click fraud,” or invalid clicks on advertisements, in which it matters (for reasons not worth going into here) how many requests come from each unique address. It helps show the “geolocation” of all requests, “which lets us address a number of issues at a geographic level, such as where there might be too much latency [slowness in Google’s response to a query], for example, in Africa.”

The real reason, for firms from Google and Yahoo to Amazon, eBay, and Expedia, is that they are all in an endless struggle to entice more people to spend more time on their sites, so they can sell more advertising. This whole effort, they believe, depends crucially on their abil-

ity to “personalize” their services. “The information about you is gold, and it’s used for ever more perfect marketing to you,” Kevin Bankston told me. “Nothing will change that unless there is a law to force them to stop.”

For users, “the fear is Panopticon,” says Lawrence Lessig, of Stanford Law School, referring to the unseen but all-seeing observer in a prison watchtower once proposed by Jeremy Bentham. “The critical point to recognize is that there simply is no such thing as anonymity on the Internet. That is not because of its technical architecture. It is because of the business model of these companies, which depends on gathering and storing as much data about the customer as you possibly can.”

What’s the potential harm? Every person I spoke with gave an example. A few were political, but most concerned the drawbacks of life in which everyone is on the record, all the time. A spouse in a divorce case might ask for Web-browsing histories to show the other spouse’s peccadilloes or peculiar interests. Vetting applicants for jobs—or nominees for official positions—could become even more intrusive than it is already, and even less forgiving of adventure or eccentricity, in an extension of today’s “just Google him” effect.

No one suggests that an online firm will deliberately disgorge everything it knows about you. Technically, Google could list every IP address that has ever launched a search for “underaged hotties” or “how to make a bomb.” Commercially, that would be suicide. Since the Googles and Yahoos need users’ trust in order to keep getting data, they, like banks or credit-card companies, have a strong incentive to compete on trustworthiness. But the long-run fear is that as unprecedented amounts of personal information pile up, all of it linked by IP addresses, more will ultimately be used.

So what are we supposed to do about it? The answers I got covered a very wide range, with one area of consensus that made me think differently about how hard individual users should—or should not—try to protect their own secrets.

At one extreme is the approach that Richard Forno describes as “wearing

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tinfoil underwear.” Marvelous tools of disguise exist, starting with encryption software for e-mail. Perhaps the most powerful one, called Tor, can be found at the Electronic Frontier Foundation Web site, tor.eff.org. Originally funded by the Navy, the system effectively conceals a user’s IP address by bouncing every Web query among routers around the world, making it harder to trace back to its origin. Tor is free but somewhat tricky to install (I have succeeded, but it took time), and it slows Web response time noticeably. I would use it only if I were working on a project I really wanted to keep under cover.

There are other, more modest protective measures. Politicians and CEOs should think twice about doing anything they wouldn’t want to see on the front page of a newspaper. Everyone else should think twice before send-

concealing steps she takes. “For a while I tried flagging every cookie I got, just for fun, but I let them all go through anyway, so eventually I stopped.”

Mitchell Kapor, the founder of Lotus, who now directs the Open Source Applications Foundation, does take a few protective measures. When using an Internet café, he doesn’t log on to PayPal, his credit-card account, or any other site that involves his finances, just in case some keystroke-capture program has been installed. He wasn’t comfortable using Gmail as one of his personal e-mail accounts until he grilled Google officials and determined that they “took privacy and security seriously when they store mail.” Kapor said that what changed his mind was evidence that Google understands how important a reputation for guarding privacy is to the company’s prospects. “They do

balancing act similar to the creation of the “do-not-call” list for telemarketers. It would preserve the legitimate commercial value of aggregate data about Internet use, while protecting individuals if the records were dredged up in legal proceedings—or simply lost, stolen, or exposed through negligence or incompetence. TiVo already applies such a policy. It keeps records of aggregate viewing patterns, which is how it knows that the Janet Jackson breast exposure, from the 2004 Super Bowl, is the most replayed event in TiVo history—but it removes all evidence of which specific customers have viewed or replayed which shows.

Nicole Wong unsurprisingly rejects the idea of controls on her own company. But she also suggests that the real privacy firewall, or at least wall, will be built through legislation, rather than ever warier behavior by individual users or more restraint by companies. “I don’t think that the fix for user privacy is companies providing less service,” she told me. “At the systemic level, the solution is to limit what personal data the government can ask for”—and by extension to limit what information banks, potential employers, divorcing spouses, and other potential snoops can find out.

“This is a big, macro public-policy issue about the design of our infrastructure,” Marc Rotenberg, of EPIC, says. “It involves payment systems, communications networks, identification, transportation toll design. It’s not something that will be solved by ‘privacy survivalism’—anonymizers, dark glasses, people paying for everything in cash. Collective problems require collective solutions.”

I feel worse than I did when I started this project, because I’ve realized how fully exposed my whole life is. I feel better when I think that companies could be required to purge data every so often, or to store data in a way that makes it hard to link one person’s name and IP address to the details of what he or she has done online. Then I remember that Congress would need to concentrate long enough to enact this change in a thoughtful, far-reaching way with minimal glitches, and I really start worrying. ■

James Fallows is a national correspondent for The Atlantic.

You can drop a letter in a mailbox without a return address and still expect to have it delivered. But that is about the only form of untraceable communication left.

ing e-mail they would not want to see broadly forwarded. (I get and send more e-mail than ever for routine business, but stick to the phone or meetings for anything sensitive.) To keep your computer from piling up data you’d rather not have it store, you can configure your Web browser to reject all cookies, or to ask you before it accepts any. (In IE, you find this via Tools/Internet Settings/Privacy. In Firefox, via Tools/Options/Privacy/Cookies.) Doing without cookies means not being able to use some sites or services at all, for instance Gmail, plus manually logging into other sites every single time. A more moderate step is to have the browser accept cookies but purge them whenever you close the browser.

On the other extreme is the approach Lawrence Lessig takes. “I don’t do anything” about privacy, he says. “I think there is no way to hide. I just live life thinking everything is in the open.” Esther Dyson, of CNET, says something similar. “The short answer is: Nothing,” she replied by e-mail when I asked what

take steps,” he told me, “to make sure that Google employees don’t just satisfy their curiosity by looking at people’s e-mail, as well as making sure that if you delete the account, they clobber all copies everywhere, including the backups.”

Between these alternatives—the hypercautious approach of encoding all e-mail and the fatalistic belief that Big Brother will see everything anyway—lay the surprise in what I heard from these informants. This was the idea that legislation—the intrusion of the stodgy old pre-digital government—offers modern computer users their best hope.

“When your choices are the tinfoil or doing nothing, that’s not right,” Lessig says. “I would rather think about how we could actually increase privacy without giving up the versatility of the Internet.”

For instance, a future law might require Google and other companies to strip specific IP addresses from records of searching or browsing activity that they intended to store for more than a brief period. This would be a

Passing Grades

Scouting is state-of-the-art, yet judging which NFL players will pan out remains a gamble. Maybe they're not the ones who should be studied

BY ALLEN BARRA

Six years ago I asked a pro football scout why, despite the enormous amounts of time and money devoted to it by NFL think tanks, the annual college draft produces such erratic results. Nobody, I noted, had been anxious to select Johnny Unitas or Bart Starr or Joe Montana—by my measure the three greatest quarterbacks of the last fifty years, winners of eleven NFL championships between them. By NFL standards they weren't very big, and didn't have great arms. (Unitas was the 102nd player drafted in 1955, Starr was the 200th in 1956, and Montana the 82nd in 1979.)

Yes, he replied, but that was in the Stone Age. Scouting had become so sophisticated in the two decades since Montana was drafted that a mistake like that was much less likely. Later that month, Tom Brady was taken in the sixth round of the 2000 draft by the New England Patriots, the 199th player selected overall. Brady would lead his team to three Super Bowls before he was twenty-eight. Though he measured high on intelligence tests, most scouts had been unimpressed with his skills. It was Patriots offensive coordinator Charlie Weis (now the Notre Dame head coach) who was adamant about drafting Brady. When I asked Weis what it was that he saw in the young quarterback, he told me, "Call it a gut feeling, but to me he had the look of a bulldog."

Bear Bryant was fond of saying, "It ain't the size of the dog in the fight; it's the size of the fight in the dog." Nowadays, computer analysis gives teams instant comparisons of hundreds of ballplayers, most of whom also take the Wonderlic test (see sidebar, page 154) for determining intelligence. But, for all the information available to scouts and teams about a player's physical attributes and mental makeup, the evaluation of NFL hopefuls remains a

maddeningly inexact science. "Intelligence, attitude, and character have so much to do with success," says Marv Levy, the former Buffalo Bills head coach and current president and general manager. "You can't just look at a player and his achievements in college and say that he'll be successful in the NFL. You don't know how he'll adapt to the speed of NFL football. You don't know how he'll react to playing against a higher level of competition." And even if one knew these things, Levy points out, there's another major stumbling block: "You have to match him up with the right system and the right coach."



The most spectacular crash-and-burn in NFL draft history was Ryan Leaf. In 1998, there were two fabulous quarterback prospects who were thought by nearly everyone to have it all—size, smarts, and arm strength: Washington State's Leaf and Tennessee's Peyton Manning. Not before or since have there been two quarterbacks whose pro potential was more hotly argued going into the draft. Indianapolis had the first pick and Arizona had No. 2. The San Diego Chargers were so convinced that Leaf was a blue-chipper that they traded three top draft picks and two players to acquire the second pick, chose Leaf, and then gave him an unprecedented \$11.25 million bonus. Leaf played two horrendous seasons for

San Diego before being released, then bounced from Tampa Bay to Dallas and, finally, Seattle. He played his last professional football game at age twenty-five. Manning, by contrast, has been the most productive passer in the league over the last seven years.

Observers are pretty much in agreement that Leaf's failure was due to lack of maturity, but that does little to explain another legendary quarterback flameout: Rick Mirer. After a sensational college career at Notre Dame, Mirer was chosen by the Seattle Seahawks with the second pick of the 1993 draft. But he never caught on in Seattle, and after four years had thrown fifteen more interceptions than touchdown passes. (NFL quarterbacks typically average the same number of touchdowns as interceptions early in their careers; Manning, however, threw thirty more touchdown passes than interceptions in his first four seasons.) Mirer played nine seasons with five teams before his career ended in 2004.

Steve Silverman, who followed both of their careers as a reporter for *Pro Football Weekly*, offers this assessment: "Leaf had gotten by for a long time on sheer ability. By the time he got to the pros, he thought he knew it all and wouldn't take instruction. He failed to develop. He was arrogant. Mirer was just the opposite. He was used to winning, and when he didn't win in the pros, he lost his confidence in his own judgment and listened to everyone's criticism of him. After his first couple of seasons, he was shell-shocked. Leaf blamed everyone else when he lost, while Mirer put all the blame on himself." Such attributes can't be measured by tests of physical ability (where both Leaf and Mirer ranked nearly even with Manning) or intelligence (Leaf's Wonderlic score

GAUGING FOOTBALL IQ

Robert Jones, a star linebacker from East Carolina University, went to a pay phone outside the 1992 NFL Scouting Combine—the pre-draft ritual where professional football teams take stock of the college talent—and called his mother.

"Ma," he said, "I'm sorry. I'm sorry."

A top scout, Dave-Te' Thomas, overheard the call. "Robert," he asked, "what the hell is going on?"

"That question really threw me," Jones replied.

The New York Giants had asked him a tough one: If he were on a capsizing boat with his mother and daughter and could save only one, which would he choose?

Besides dashing forty yards, bench-pressing 225 pounds, and weaving between cones, would-be professional football players must submit to full psychological workups before teams are willing to take the multimillion-dollar gamble of drafting them. Thomas, whose scouting reports are disseminated to twenty-seven of the thirty-two NFL teams, evaluates players by every means available: family history, GPA, game film—he even checks the police blotter. He also compiles his own statistics to flesh out the widely available numbers, comparing receptions, for instance, to the total number of passes a wide receiver was thrown and the strength of the opposing defensive secondary.

With playbooks approaching phone-book heft, however, intelligence has become a key measure of NFL draftees. The standard measure is the Wonderlic Personnel Test, a general intelligence exam taken by 2.5 million people seeking all types of work each year. It was first used in the NFL more than thirty years ago, and it has since been adopted by every team. (Most clubs also administer their own tests. Jones was forced to choose between mother and daughter on the New York Giants' nearly-500-question personality profile, which can take up to three hours to take and is followed up with psychiatric screenings.) The Wonderlic rewards quick thinking and problem-solving: the taker has twelve minutes to answer fifty questions of increasing difficulty, from no-brainers—"the ninth month of the year is?"—to algebraic stumbers.

The only NFL player to score a perfect 50 was punter and Harvard alumnus Pat McNally, in 1975. (Scores are not officially released, but the results leak

every year.) Only about 1 in 30,000 takers gets a perfect score, according to a 1992 study done by the testing company. The average score for NFL draftees over the past twenty years is a 19, which puts them a peg higher than aspiring drivers, deliverymen, and claims clerks, but not quite at the level of quality-control checkers (19.19), food-department managers (19.14), or machinists (19.54). The smartest group, on average, is attorneys (29.67), followed by editors (28.84) and executives (28.70). The lowest scorers, all around 15, are janitors, material handlers, and, in dead last, packers. A 10 is literacy, according to Wonderlic President Charlie Wonderlic Jr., and any score of 12 or under means the prospect is likely to be "successful using simple tools under consistent supervision." At this year's combine it was reported that Texas quarterback Vince Young, one of the draft's top prospects, scored a 6 on the test. His agent contested the report, but did confirm that Young retook the test and scored a 16.

The minimum scores Thomas recommends to his teams are a 20 for quarterbacks, a 23 for offensive linemen, a 20 for middle linebackers and safeties, and a 15 for wide receivers and cornerbacks. "They're more built for speed," he says. "I don't want to say that that's where you put the dumb cookies, but in general that's where they end up." High numbers can also raise doubts—they flag potential smartasses, and a lack of the mental malleability that coaches need in players. "Another scout would figure, 'Oh my God, this kid's going to come in and argue with me about everything on the chalkboard,'" Thomas says.

Mac Mirabile, an economist who studies football, researched the relationship between Wonderlic score and draft position and salary for quarterbacks from 1999 to 2004, and found that there wasn't one. "You ask yourself why they would be spending hours putting these guys through the test," he says. But to a scout, every bit of information matters—even Robert Jones's decision to let his mother go down with the ship. "Obviously, if I'm sitting there and I got myself a linebacker," Thomas says, "I want the linebacker to save the kid." No matter how strange Thomas's logic, it wasn't off the mark. Jones played on three Super Bowl-winning teams. —MATTHEW QUIRK

was reportedly just a point below Manning's, and Mirer's was slightly higher).

Yogi Berra, an athlete who won a record ten World Series rings without the apparent capacity for scoring high on any physical or intelligence tests, may have said it best: "Half this game is 90 percent mental." According to Marv Levy, it's the percentage of the game that's mental that makes the difference between winners and losers at the professional level. "By the time a player reaches the NFL," he explains, "it's really no longer a question of talent. All the players have tremendous talent. If there's one thing I want to know about a player, it's how he will react under fire, what kind of decisions he'll make in tough situations—if he has the ability to make reads on the fly." But it's precisely that ability that still can't be predicted. In fact, some wonder whether the college game hasn't become so regimented that it discourages the ability to perform with grace under pressure that's so prized in the professional ranks.

"There's never been more talented players in the game than now," says Bart Starr, who quarterbacked Vince Lombardi's Green Bay Packers to five championships in the 1960s and was later a head coach himself for nine seasons. "I can't help wondering, though, if it wasn't more fun to play years ago, when it was more of a player's game. Today, from high school on up, in nearly every situation there are so many substitutes, so many specialists, and so many coaches deciding plays that the players themselves might feel programmed. When I played, a quarterback called most of his own plays. Now decisions are made on the sideline by a committee of coaches. The time comes when every player has to make quick decisions in tight situations, but in many cases their training hasn't prepared them for it. In fact, it may have prepared them against it."

Talented players like Ryan Leaf and Rick Mirer might have succeeded in the pros if they had found the right coaches in the pros to bring out their best qualities. "I'm often surprised," says three-time Super Bowl-winning coach Bill Walsh, "at how seldom a coach's ability to motivate isn't considered when analyzing a player's success or failure. A lot

of guys who you see go bust their first time around in the NFL do end up fulfilling their early expectations, but with different teams and different coaches. The trick for a really smart coach is to make his players see how smart he is without destroying their confidence in their own intelligence."

The NFL may be focusing their efforts in the wrong place. Maybe tests should be designed to grade coaches—they're the ones who have to mold a disparate group of young men into a team. One of the NFL's great stories is how Vince Lombardi turned the Green Bay Packers into the first great football dynasty of the modern age. When Lombardi took over the Packers, in 1959, he inherited a team of high-round draft picks that had finished 1-10-1 the

previous season. Working with almost the same roster, Lombardi finished 7-5 his first season, and the following year he had the Packers in the NFL championship game. He succeeded in large part by putting players into positions more suited to their talents. For instance, Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback Paul Hornung was switched to running back, and running back Herb Adderly was remade into an All-Pro defensive back. Lombardi's greatest talent, though, once he had matched the players with their proper roles in his system, was to convince them that they could win.

Is there a brief definition for this quality in a coach? "Yes," says Walsh. "It's called the ability to inspire."

The Houston Texans, by virtue of their league-worst 2-14 record last sea-

son, have the No. 1 pick in this year's draft. By most accounts, they'll select either USC's Heisman Trophy-winning tailback Reggie Bush or quarterback Vince Young of the national champion Texas Longhorns. Both have been the subject of extensive state-of-the-art research, from computer analysis of the results of their physical and mental tests to frame-by-frame analysis of their game films. It might be a good idea for Bush and Young to devote a similar amount of time and effort to studying the coaching staffs of the teams they'll be playing for before signing their pro contracts—no matter how lucrative those contracts are. ▀

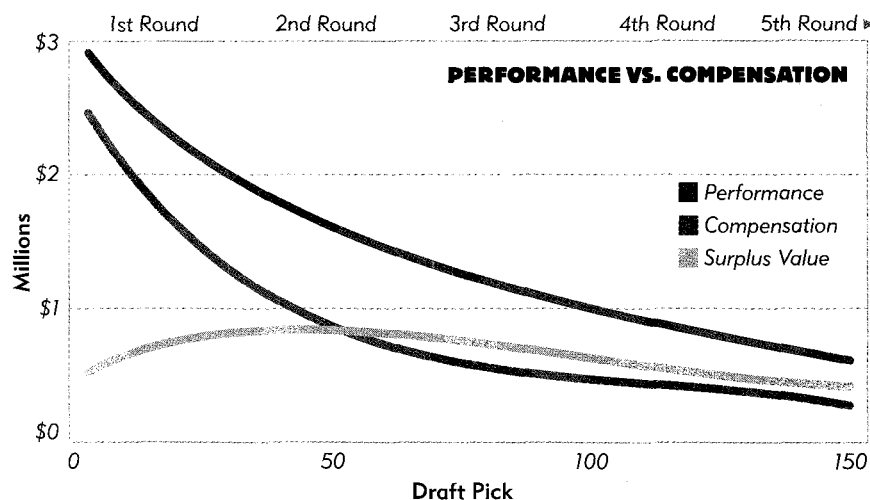
Allen Barra writes about sports for the Wall Street Journal. His latest book, The Last Coach: A Life of Paul "Bear" Bryant, is due out in paperback this fall.

THE LOSER'S CURSE

The NFL draft is supposed to even things out by giving the best college players to the worst pro teams. Two professors, Cade Massey and Richard H. Thaler, suspect that bidders at the annual draft fall prey to a variety of irrationalities, including the common phenomenon at auctions wherein the top bidder overpays: "The Winner's Curse." After all, in any given season over his first five years, a first-round draft pick is almost as likely to not start a single game (8 percent) or fail out of the league (8 percent) as he is to go to the Pro Bowl (9 percent).

What Massey and Thaler found was that, in terms of performance (games started, Pro Bowl selections, etc.) per dollar, the top draft pick is actually the worst choice in the first round. Because the cost of players falls off far more quickly than the average performance in the draft, teams are better off trading down to late in the first or even into the second round, where they can get more players cheaper who, taken together, will contribute more performance.

The figure above is an approximation of how the cost of players (compensation) compares with the value of their performance. By looking at what veteran players earn on the free market (allowing for free agency), Massey and Thaler were able to establish the market price of different levels of performance based on several statistics. They then compared the value of the performance



The curves (all approximations) compare draftees' compensation with the value of their performance on the field over the first five years. Draft picks taken at the end of the first round and in the second net a much larger benefit for a team than the first pick.

that draftees bring to a team in their first five years with what they are actually paid—Massey and Thaler call the difference a player's "surplus value"—by draft order, to find out which picks are the best deals. The good news for teams is that the whole draft is a good deal, as the rookie salary caps keep prices artificially low.

Top picks do perform better than lower-round choices, but performance falls much more slowly than compensation. The most value per dollar can be found in the second half of the first round and in the second round, where players have good performances on average but are not as expensive. The payoff peaks at about the forty-third

pick (the eleventh pick in the second round of this year's draft), who brings in a five-year performance worth around \$750,000 more than his price. Of those first forty-three selections, the No. 1 pick is actually the worst in cost-benefit terms, since that player eats up so much of the budget. This phenomenon is growing more pronounced over time.

Despite all the effort and number crunching that goes into scouting, teams are still overpaying and giving up valuable lower picks for a chance at the top draftees. The smart thing would be to trade down, seeing as the last pick in the top round actually brings more net benefit to a team. —MATTHEW QUIRK

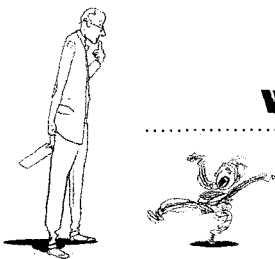
Who's making a fortune?
Who's frittering one away?
Who's on the front page?
Who's on the front lines?
Who designed those jeans?
Who designed those genes?
Who's reaching out?
Who's selling out?
Who lives in that big house?
Who lives in *the* big house?
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WORD FUGITIVES

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

What would be “a word for that time of half sleep when one thinks of the solution to a problem” or the like? This challenge, when it was presented in December, practically invited readers to experiment with it as an alternative to counting sheep. “As I was dozing off last night,” Penny Dunham, of Allentown, Pennsylvania, wrote, “I realized that I was engaged in a *rest-creational activity*.” Jason Eberhart-Phillips, of Dunedin, New Zealand, reported he was half asleep when *ennighenment* came to him. Laura I. Maniglia, of Branford, Connecticut, wrote, “After reading the column last evening, I fell asleep; I thought of *indreamious* and *indreamuity* upon awaking this morning.” And Katherine F. Larsen, of El Dorado, California, wrote, “When I awoke at 6:20 this morning, I wrote down fourteen possibilities,” among them *daybreakthrough*.

Ed Flanagan, of Ormond Beach, Florida, also solves problems during what he calls *temporeverie*, but he complained, “When I’m fully awake, I can’t remember the important details.” Others know something he could try: Mohamed Kamara, of Lexington, Virginia, who coined *dozepiphany*, wrote, “I’ve developed the habit of having a pen and paper always close to my bed.” Tann H. Hunt, of Tallahassee, Florida, who coined *sleeplution*, uses a pen and Post-its. Richard Stanco, of Brookfield, Connecticut, who coined *somnolotion*, includes a small flashlight in his bedside kit.

Because the existing word *hypnagogic* means “of, relating to, or occurring in the state of intermediate consciousness preceding sleep,” and *hypnopompic* means “of or relating to the partially conscious state that precedes complete awakening from sleep,” many people came up with *hyp-* coinages. Among these were *hypnagogignosis* and *hypnopompignosis* (both from Mark Doescher, of Seattle), *hypknowsis* (Craig Buschmann, of Salt Lake City), *hypnagogic suggestion* (Ryan Walton, of Boston), *hypnosynthesis*

(Jonathan Gellman, of the Bronx, New York), and *hypnologic* (Chuck Barton, of East Greenwich, Rhode Island).

Sleepiphany was the coinage most often proposed. Clever, but this word—along with most of the previous ones—has a crucial flaw. A *sleepiphany* would be the solution a person dreams up, not the time of half sleep that we wanted a name for. Karen Scott, of Austin, Texas, took the requested tack. She wrote, “I like to call the time between sleeping and waking, when the best ideas occur, *getting*



forty thinks.” Cathy Capozzoli, of Kapaa, Hawaii, wrote, “Have you thought of calling the precious time between asleep and awake *snorkeling*? You are just below the surface, so what you may see is different from what you may see just above.”

Top honors go to Dale Beames, of Deerfield Beach, Florida, for a word that does double duty: *twilighenment*. It’s apt for the time of half sleep—and as a bonus, it can also mean a solution arrived at during this time, as so many people seemed to want the coinage to do.

Also in December a reader wanted a word for the situation in which children say they’re hungry and ask when supper will be ready, and then have to be nagged to come to the table. Thomas Zappala, of Needham, Massachusetts, and Martin Pietrucha, of State College, Pennsylvania, thought the children must have *vanished*; Gerry Balsley, of Corinth, Texas, that they *famoosed*.

Words proposed for this fugitive often came in pairs. Barbara Springer, of Cloudercroft, New Mexico, wrote, “My mother, who was married four times, complained that all her husbands acted in the manner described, and she had a name for it: *whining and dining*. However, children were not allowed to *whine and dine*; if they tried, it was called just plain misbehavior and treated as such.” Graham Warren, of New Haven, Connecticut, looked at the situation from the point of view of the children and came up with *chide and hide*. Clare Broyles, of Phoenix, wrote, “My kids often do the same, and I would term it (since they are kids, after all) *bleat and run*.” Who could top that? No one did: Broyles takes top honors.

Now DEBRA FARRINGTON, of Hershey, Pennsylvania, writes: “My husband is a pack rat; he keeps everything. I am just the opposite. There is no word, however, for the opposite of a pack rat. What would we call people who are good at letting go of possessions, rather than keeping things in case they might—decades from now—need them again?”

And TONY WOODLIEF, of Wichita, Kansas, writes: “I need a term for that delicious property in some relationships that allows two people who haven’t spoken in years to simply dive into conversation as if they’ve not been apart.”

Send words that meet Debra Farrington’s or Tony Woodlief’s needs to *Word Fugitives*, The Atlantic Monthly, P.O. Box 67375, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, or visit the *Word Fugitives* page on our Web site, at www.theatlantic.com/fugitives. Submissions must be received by May 31. Use the same addresses to submit word fugitives that you’d like The Atlantic’s help in finding. Letters become the property of *Word Fugitives* and may be edited.

Readers whose queries are published and those whose words are singled out for top honors will each receive, with our thanks, a selection of recent autographed books by Atlantic authors. The next installment’s correspondents will be sent To Hell With All That, by Caitlin Flanagan; Guests of the Ayatollah, by Mark Bowden; and my own *Word Fugitives*.

He Made the Refrains Run on Time

Romano Mussolini (1927–2006)

BY MARK STEYN

Back in the sixties, the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band, Britain's leading psychedelic novelty group, recorded a number called "The Intro and the Outro." You know that moment when you see some act live onstage and midway through the set they do an extended if not interminable beginning to the song so the leader can introduce every member of the band individually? Well, that's what the Bonzos did:

Hi there, nice to be with you, happy
you could stick around. Like to intro-
duce "Legs" Larry Smith, drums ...

Only in this case the intro never stopped. After the real band members and some genuine special guests—"Eric Clapton on ukulele"—Viv Stanshall moved on to some even more unlikely soloists:

Princess Anne on sousaphone ...
Looking very relaxed, Adolf Hitler
on vibes ...
Yeah! Digging General de Gaulle
on accordion ...
Really wild, General! Thank you,
sir!

I would like to have seen Adolf Hitler on vibes. The closest I came was one night in the nineties, in London at a jazz boîte called Pizza on the Park: up onstage, looking very relaxed, Mussolini on piano ... Not Il Duce himself, but the son of, Romano. Mussolini père wound up hanging with his mistress at that gas station; Mussolini fils preferred to hang with Chet Baker and Lionel Hampton at hot nightclubs.

Junior seemed in better shape than Pop did at that age, and not just because at that age Pop was getting strung up in the Piazzale Loreto. Romano was similarly bald but taller and thinner than Benito. Your initial reaction was that he'd make a much more photogenic dictator than Dad, but then you noticed

that he was way too mellow. You can get away with being short and looking like you're bustin' your blackshirt if you've got the requisite 24/7 passionate intensity. It was just about possible to imagine Romano as an amused 007 villain—"I'm afraid you're beginning to bore me, Mr. Bond"—but not conquering Ethiopia. The closest family resemblance was the pudgy fingers with which he plunked the ivories.

Romano played, to my ears, like a slightly melancholic Oscar Peterson. Occasionally inspired, he was always efficient: he made the refrains run on time. To be honest, I'd only gone to see him because I liked the whimsy in his moniker—"The Romano Mussolini All-Stars." They weren't all-stars, just solid Italian *molto hip* cats; the only star quality, as he recognized early on in his career, was the enduring potency, or at any rate curiosity value, of his pa's name. But the designation hinted at least at the possibility of some A-list combo of second-generation dictatorial talent. There was a comic in London in those days called Bing Hitler, but I don't believe he was a blood relative—and, come to think about it, he's since dropped the Hitler handle and gone on to great success as CBS late-night host Craig Ferguson. The Führer and Eva Braun died without issue and, according to most experts, without much heavy petting. But if only the Mussolini All-Stars had lived up to their billing: Artie Hitler on clarinet, Miles Tse Tung on trumpet, Woody Stalin, Buddy Franco ...

I was introduced to him after the show and, of course, everyone was way too cool to ask about Dad or the old days. So instead he made the kind of standard jazz small talk that non-jazz buffs find so tedious—all Dizzy this and Monk that—but with a beguiling accent that made me swear at one point he'd

referenced a song called "Fascisnatin' Rhythm." The conversation had a surreal frisson, like running into Uday and Qusay at a pro-celeb golf tournament and chitchatting about Tiger as you play a couple of holes. If you want to escape the sins of the father, going into jazz is a smart move: unlike men bent on world domination, which by definition obliges one to keep an eye on the far horizon, not least when posing for official portraits, the jazz scene tends to the self-absorbed. Half these fellows are barely cognizant of what continent they're on, never mind who's oppressing it. During his sojourn in Italy forty-five years ago, Chet Baker played a stint with Romano at the Bussola in Viareggio. There's a famous story that, after their first set together, it was pointed out to Chet whose son Romano was. The trumpeter went over to the piano and commiserated: "Gee, it's a drag about your old man." Romano always professed to have no memory of the exchange—"Chet and I never discussed politics"—but Caterina Valente, the Continental chanteuse with whom they toured, claims to have been present and insists it happened.

The prototype fascist's youngest son was named for the glorious new imperialism already under way by the time he was born in 1927. Romano had a happy childhood in a close-knit family: four siblings, one duce, one mom, two tortoisés, two ponies, two parrots, two gazelles, two lions, a monkey, and a jaguar. The youngster had fond memories of his pa's signature pose—fists on hips, jutting jaw, looking like either a visionary leader or a bitch waiter at Coconut Grove when you send back the curly endive. Apparently, Dad liked to adopt the stance not just to whip up the masses below the balcony but around the house as well, though more "playfully."

They were a musical family. When he wasn't dictating, Benito liked to play violin for hours on end. But, even at a young age, musically Romano disdained Il Duce in favor of Il Duke: his older brother Vittorio gave him a record of Ellington doing "Black Beauty," the first jazz Romano ever heard, and he was hooked. Being decadent and Negro, it wasn't the easiest music to come by in Fascist Italy, but Romano sought it out



Maximus. After the lynching of his father and the close of the war, he ended up with his mother and sister in exile on the isle of Ischia, where the only jazz was at the local barber shop and he liked to sit in on guitar.

When he returned to the mainland in the 1950s, he performed as "Romano Full" until he discovered that his father's name, far from repelling customers, was actually a commercial plus. While members of the House of Savoy were forbidden to set foot in the new Italian republic,

members of the House of Mussolini were relatively untroubled. It was Romano's musical associations that caused him problems, not his political ones. "At that time it was very dangerous to have contact with him because the police investigated everyone," he recalled, but he was talking about the famously drugged-up Chet Baker rather than any old-time fascist.

If you were making a movie of his life, it'd be a cinch: the young man finds in wild improvisatory American jazz all the freedom he's been denied by his oppressive Fascist background. In fact, if you asked him, Romano Mussolini would cheerfully concede he agreed with "90 percent" of his father's policies, and, apropos the murkier 10 percent, there weren't many other Fascist scions who could plead in mitigation that some of their best session players were Jewish. In the last couple of years, he began turning out coffee-table books about Daddy that proved big sellers. Alessandra Mussolini, his daughter by his first wife (Sophia Loren's sister), went into politics in the nineties and, though dismissed as a pleasingly underdressed slice of neo-Fascist cheesecake, has become a player in Italian coalition-building. A couple of weeks ago,

Colonel Qaddafi threatened attacks against Rome unless the government paid reparations to Libya for colonialism. Alessandra was having none of it. "If it hadn't been for my grandfather, they would still be riding camels with turbans on their heads," she said. "They are the ones who should be paying us compensation, because it was a positive colonization. Fascism exported democracy, as well as roads, houses, and schools." It may yet be that Romano was only a musical interlude before the resumption of the family business.

He was proud of his daughter. When she founded her current party, Social Alternative, he chipped in by composing the official anthem, "The Pride of Being Italian." The lyric's somewhat generic, but Alessandra's recording of it is spirited:

Together for the future
The pride of being Italian
The ideals that unite us are our truth.

Romano Mussolini's funeral is surely one of the few to feature both "When the Saints Go Marching In" (inside the church) and Fascist salutes (outside the church, from Italians pining for a new duce). It was the first time the twin threads of his life had come together since the last time he saw his father, on the morning of April 17, 1945, at Lake Garda. "I was playing Franz Lehar's *Merry Widow* on the piano," he wrote. "The composer had given my father the original score, and he reacted with enthusiasm whenever it was played. I thought he would stand and listen to me for a few moments." Instead, the dictator embraced his boy, said "Ciao, Romano," and before going out to the waiting car, gave a final salute. Eleven days later, he was caught by Communist partisans, executed, and hanged at the Esso station.

His last words to his son: "Keep playing."

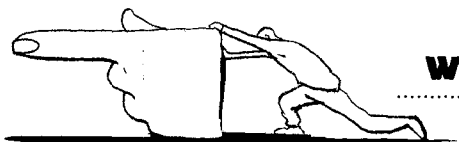
Romano did. ▀

Mark Steyn is a columnist for the Chicago Sun-Times and other publications.

wherever he could. "I remember the first time I heard a Louis Armstrong record," he said. "The sound was so beautiful I cried." American 78s were available in Rome under Italianized names—Louis Armstrong was sold as "Luigi Fortebraccio." His brother Vittorio would return from trips abroad with the latest Benny Goodman and Count Basie. Romano got more pleasure listening to King Oliver than his dad ever got from listening to King Victor Emmanuel.

In later life, Romano would protest that his father's antipathy to jazz was much exaggerated and that he greatly enjoyed Fats Waller. Hard to imagine the dictator singing along to "Keepin' Out of Mischief Now" or "Your Feet's Too Big." By 1943, it was Mussolini whose feats were too big: he'd projected Italian power far beyond its credible limits and, after military humiliations and the Anglo-American landings on Sicily, he was fired by the king only to be snatched by the Nazis and installed in Gargnano as head of the "Italian Social Republic." A chippy teenager, young Romano was wont to offend their German benefactors by playing boogie-woogie in their presence. Despite being born to neo-imperial destiny, he was already running away from the Circus

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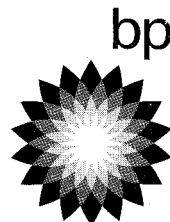
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